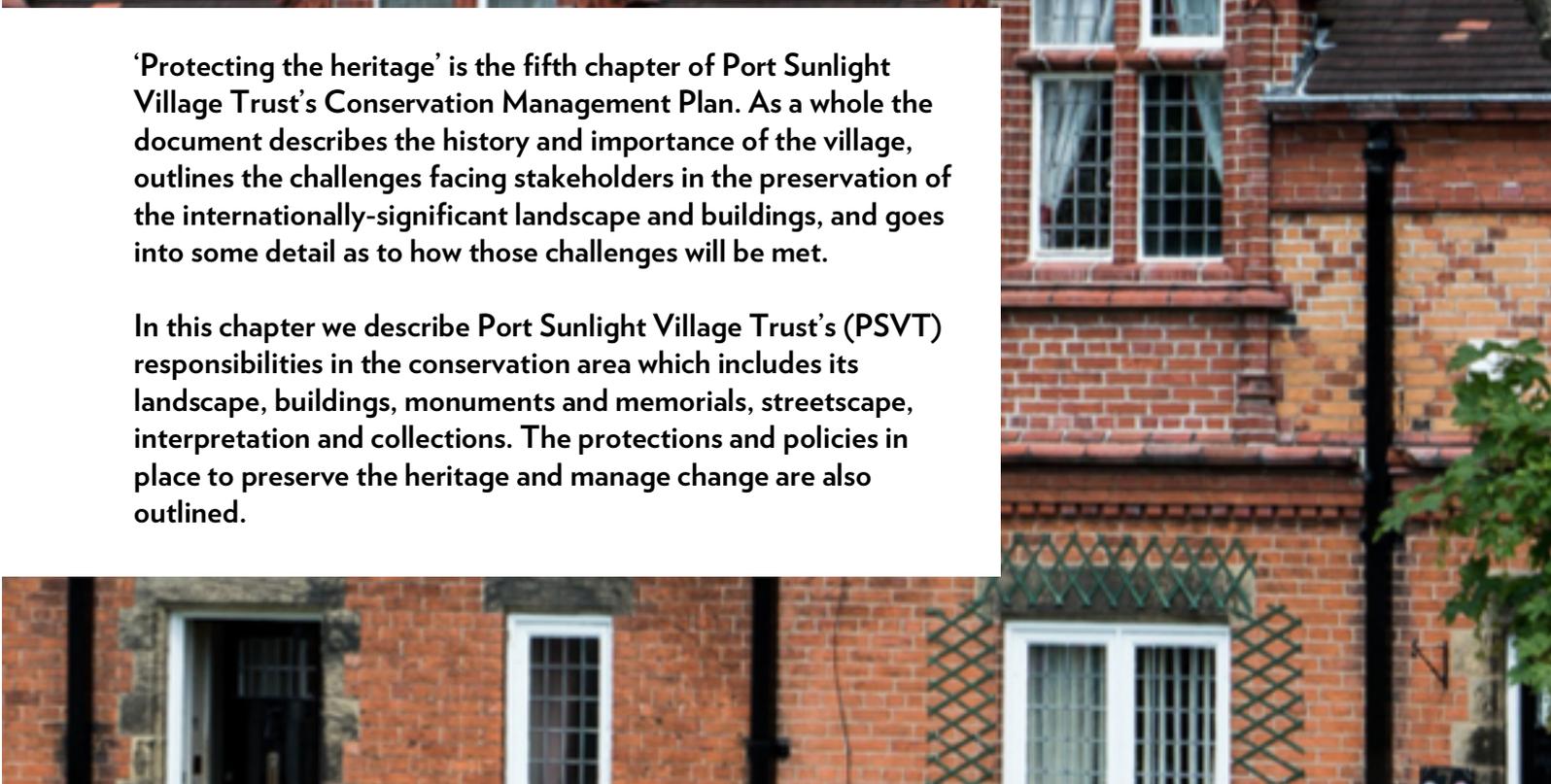


## Chapter 5: Protecting the Heritage

**‘Protecting the heritage’ is the fifth chapter of Port Sunlight Village Trust’s Conservation Management Plan. As a whole the document describes the history and importance of the village, outlines the challenges facing stakeholders in the preservation of the internationally-significant landscape and buildings, and goes into some detail as to how those challenges will be met.**

**In this chapter we describe Port Sunlight Village Trust’s (PSVT) responsibilities in the conservation area which includes its landscape, buildings, monuments and memorials, streetscape, interpretation and collections. The protections and policies in place to preserve the heritage and manage change are also outlined.**



## 5.1 Designations and protections

In Port Sunlight village, there are three tiers of protection:

- Statutory listing
- Conservation area designation
- Restrictive covenants

These policies and covenants are in place to properly manage, rather than to prevent, change. They establish standards and guidelines that have been proven to stabilise and improve property values whilst protecting the special character, setting and appearance of the village.

While PSVT is responsible for the ‘preservation and promotion’ of the majority of the landscape, community and commercial buildings, monuments and memorials in the village and a third of the housing stock, there are other stakeholders with significant responsibilities including Wirral Borough Council, housing groups, private and independent businesses, and private owner-occupiers and landlords.

### Listed building designations

The majority of the houses and buildings in Port Sunlight were designated as Grade II-listed buildings in 1965, and almost all monuments and memorials are listed as either Grade II, II\* or Grade I. This means that approval must be gained from Wirral Borough Council through the Listed Building Consent process before making any changes which might affect the special architectural, aesthetic, historic or communal interest. This applies to external and internal alterations.

### Conservation area designation

Since the 1967 Civic Amenities Act, local authorities have been empowered to designate as conservation areas those areas within their districts which were considered ‘special’. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act of 1990 defines conservation areas as:

*“Areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”.*<sup>51</sup>

Port Sunlight was designated as a conservation area in 1978, further protecting its trees, the external elevations of properties in the village and its wider setting. The views, vistas and the historic layout of roads, public spaces, parks, street furniture, trees and street surfaces all contribute to the special character and appearance of a conservation area.

### Restrictive covenant

The heritage and residential character of the village is protected through restrictive covenants agreed with PSVT. The covenants are in the title deeds for every residential property in Port Sunlight and require owners to:

- Keep their buildings, boundary walls and fences in good repair and condition.
- Paint the exterior of their homes according to the Trust’s paint and finish scheme.
- Receive written permission from the Trust before installing aerials and satellite dishes.
- Receive written permission from the Trust before alterations, extensions or other additions

- to property are made.
- Use their property purely as a dwelling house.

### Local Planning Policies

An area-specific planning policy has been contained within the Council's adopted statutory Development Plan since February 2000 to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area and its setting, which is proposed to be retained in the Council's latest emerging Local Plan.

Policy CH9 – Port Sunlight Conservation Area, in the Council's existing Unitary Development Plan, states that:

In relation to Port Sunlight Conservation Area the principal planning objectives for the area will be to:

- preserve the planned layout of the village and unifying features, such as the scale, massing, and design of buildings, including the use of superblocs, together with their landscape setting
- to retain the historic factory frontage overlooking the village from Wood Street; and
- to preserve the visual setting of the Church and Art Gallery, including the formal axis of The Diamond.

Priority will be given to retaining primarily residential uses within the conservation area and notwithstanding designation as Urban Greenspace, to preserving the formal character and layout of the open spaces and landscaped areas designated under Proposal GR2.

The open spaces at Lodge Lane, Corniche Road, The Ginnel, Park Road (The Dell), Bolton Road, Queen Mary's Drive, King George's Drive and The Causeway and at Lower Road (alongside the Lady Lever Art Gallery) and Circular Drive are designated for protection as Urban Greenspace and the open spaces at the The Dell, The Diamond and The Causeway are nationally registered Historic Parks and Gardens at Grade II.

There are also more general policies for the protection of heritage (Policy CH01), development affecting listed buildings and structures (Policy CH1), development affecting conservation areas (Policy CH2), demolition control within conservation areas (Policy CH3) and development affecting scheduled ancient monuments (Policy CH24), non-scheduled remains (Policy CH25) and the preservation of historic parks and gardens (Policy CH26), which must also be complied with.

National planning policies for heritage are also set out in the Government's National Planning Policy Framework.

### Enforcement

PSVT has previously acknowledged properties which have breached the restrictive covenant and have contacted property owners directly to reverse the works within a given time limit. However, PSVT does not currently have a strategy in place to enforce the restrictive covenants.

Wirral Borough Council is empowered by planning legislation to take the appropriate enforcement action when breaches of planning control have taken place. For Port Sunlight, this would include

breaches of listed building and conservation area regulations (including trees). Advice is provided, sometimes in the form of a warning letter, to assist individuals and businesses in rectifying breaches as quickly and efficiently as possible, avoiding the need for further enforcement action. If however, the advice is not heeded then legal action could be taken against property owners and financial penalties may be applied.

### **Heritage policy initiative**

PSVT worked in partnership with Wirral Borough Council and with the support of Historic England to develop one of the country's first Local Listed Building Consent Orders (LLBCO) to clarify and streamline the consent process for the most common classes of work in the village. The LLBCO reduces Wirral Borough Council's staffing and resource burden by removing work required to review and approve repetitive listed building consent applications for the village.

The Port Sunlight LLBCO was adopted in November 2015 and established blanket consent for the appropriate installation of satellite dishes and the replacement of severely deteriorated or inappropriate rear windows, rear doors and yard gates.

This ground-breaking work includes drawings and technical specifications for appropriate windows, doors and yards gates, and includes a strategy for ensuring replacement features are true to the original design and materials of the house.

The LLBCO has several benefits. It can be used as a tool to tackle enforcement issues as the appropriately designed and specified feature is clearly described in the documents. It supports owners by lowering the cost of the work: the LLBCO already includes drawings and specifications for rear doors and yard gates, so individual owners do not need to commission this work. The LLBCO has been particularly useful to both residents and the Trust when repairing features severely damaged by the explosion of March 2017. Lastly, the LLBCO can be used as a tool to ensure alterations to the rear of Port Sunlight houses are appropriate to the character and heritage of the individual listed houses and the conservation area.

## **5.2 Current maintenance arrangements**

### **Built heritage**

PSVT owns around a third of residential properties in the village, and cyclical maintenance works are carried out every five years under the supervision of dedicated maintenance and conservation officers. Works are then specified and tendered to external contractors. Some commercial and community buildings in PSVT's ownership are operated by the Trust while others are leased out to private businesses. The terms of the non-residential leases vary as to whether they are tenant repairing (ie the tenant is fully responsible for the repair of the building) or not.

Advice and support is also extended to private landlords and owner-occupiers in the village.

### **Landscape**

All public landscape spaces and front gardens for every property are maintained and managed by a dedicated in-house landscape gardening team. They also care for the Sea Piece Fountain and the frontages of public buildings (excluding the Bridge Inn and the Lady Lever Art Gallery). Trees and hedgerows which are located within property frontages are also maintained by the Trust.

Tenants, owner-occupiers and private landlords are responsible for the maintenance of rear gardens, including any trees which are located there. Permission is required from Wirral Borough Council for work on trees and any planning proposal which impact on the significance of the two registered landscapes - The Dell and The Diamond.

### Monuments & memorials

PSVT owns and looks after the monuments and memorials within Port Sunlight, apart from the Founder's Tomb, which is owned and cared for by the Leverhulme family and the grave markers in Christ Church cemetery. Maintenance of Dell Bridge has been shared between Wirral Borough Council and PSVT (or its predecessors) over the years. Cleaning, repair and restoration works are tendered to external contractors. There is currently no cyclical maintenance programme in place for monuments and memorials.

### Public realm

Benches, bins, bollards and wayfinding (such as pointer signs) are under the ownership of PSVT. There is currently no cyclical survey, maintenance and repair programme for these items, but they are repaired and replaced on an individual basis.

Wirral Borough Council is responsible for the maintenance and installation of other elements of the public realm, including streetlights, pavements and road surfaces.

### Volunteers

Since its formation in 1999, PSVT has worked with a number of volunteers across all areas of our operations, each supported by a dedicated member of staff. The village benefits from its volunteers and from well-informed and motivated residents who are a valuable source of help and support. Past activities have included the creation of an analemmatic sundial on the site of the former bandstand. This project was led by the Friends of Port Sunlight Village who secured a BIFFA grant to deliver the work. Volunteers from local schools and the community plant seasonal bedding in the village, and assist in the maintenance of roses along The Diamond. Local residents and students from Salford University and the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) also volunteered in the village-wide exterior conditions survey of each residential property.

## 5.3 PSVT's heritage policies

**This section includes a summary of PSVT's policies for the protection and sustainable management of two of the three main strands of heritage in Port Sunlight: the landscape and our built heritage.**

The collections policy and action plan will be developed in 2018.

Full policy documents are included in the appendices, along with PSVT's policies for access and the environment. Although separate from the heritage policies, these two policies are integral to the care and enhancement of the heritage of Port Sunlight.

### **Decision makers**

PSVT has developed the heritage policies and objectives to guide and inform decision making. These are core documents for staff and volunteers, setting the standards for work commissioned by PSVT and establishing standards of care for all stakeholders.

### **Heritage policies**

#### **Common ground**

PSVT has developed policies for landscape and built heritage to guide and inform decision-making regarding cyclical maintenance, repair and new work.

Although separate policies have been adopted for landscape, built heritage the environment and access, all include requirements for documentation, justification, record keeping and review. These shared requirements will ensure the policies are consistently applied and proper records are maintained.

#### **Documentation**

- If proposed work will adversely impact on heritage (and it has been determined that the benefit of the proposed work outweighs the loss or damage to the heritage), then the heritage should be recorded with photographs and/or drawings. These files will become part of the property record and the history of the village.
- All work should be justified or supported by reliable archival information, including period photographs, architectural drawings, maps or site plans, maintenance records and other documents.

#### **Justification for intervention**

Testing and analysis should form the basis for work (new, restoration or repair) that could affect the material performance, longevity and appearance of heritage.

#### **Record keeping**

- All decisions, justifications, adverse impacts, benefits, direct costs and maintenance costs should be recorded by the decision maker in a central log.
- The log will be reviewed annually to assess performance and to determine if the heritage policies are properly understood and fit for purpose.
- As part of the on-going record of the heritage of the village, the action plan of the Conservation Management Plan should be updated to document interventions or changes.

#### **Review**

- The heritage policies should be reviewed by PSVT every two years to ensure that they remain fit for purpose and in line with current heritage philosophy and practice.

### Landscape management policy

The landscape management policy includes all publicly-accessible soft landscape, planted and grassed areas, properties' front open spaces, trees, hedges, footpaths, street furniture and landscape settings (ie adjacent railway banking and New Chester Road). Basic standards of care for the private gardens and ownership boundaries to the backs of the houses are covered under the individual property covenants agreed with PSVT. The policy was written to sit alongside and complement the built heritage policy, the access policy and the environmental policy.

### Principles for intervention

- All decisions and actions relating to the landscape of Port Sunlight should respect its historic significance and design.
- Change to the landscape (including maintenance, physical intervention or change of land use) should be sustainable and enhance biodiversity.
- Trees should be managed safely in order to restore planned vistas, improve the quality of life for residents, increase resilience to disease outbreaks and enhance the historic character of the conservation area.
- Where a proposed change to the plant/tree species is suggested this should consider the historical context and period, its location in relation to existing buildings and/or infrastructure and maintenance requirements.
- All decisions should have a bias and preference for repairing original or character features rather than replacing them (even if they are replaced like-for-like).
- Where external bodies undertake work within the village, all work should adopt the principles of this policy and repairs should be invisible (not discernible from original conditions).
- Major interventions, including new developments and major reconstructions, should integrate landscape proposals that are in-keeping with the scale, material palette and character of the conservation area.
- If there is a proposal to rebuild a lost heritage landscape feature, this work should only be undertaken if it will be truly authentic to the agreed era and documented with photographs, drawings and archival records. If it is not possible to recreate the lost heritage authentically, the bias should be towards a new design that is in keeping with the heritage character of Port Sunlight.
- It is accepted that the landscape is an ever-changing feature of the village and appropriate succession planting should be integrated within the management and maintenance of the landscape.

### Built heritage policy

The built heritage policy covers works to the community and commercial buildings, houses and flats, major built-landscape features, and monuments and memorials. It has been written to sit alongside and complement the landscape management policy.

### Repairs, maintenance work, minor work and conservation

- There is no single solution for repairs or interventions to heritage features. Each case should be considered on an individual basis, taking into account: the age of the feature; the varied materials and architectural styles found throughout Port Sunlight; the rarity of the feature to be altered, repaired or replaced; the existing deteriorated conditions, and any known or suspected previous interventions that might impact on material performance or heritage character.

- Minor repairs should be invisible (not discernible from original conditions).
- All repairs or interventions to a heritage feature should be reversible.
- All decisions should have a bias and preference for repairing original or character features rather than replacing them (even if they are replaced like-for-like).
- Repairs or interventions should be designed to do the least harm and/or have the lowest impact on heritage character or features.
- Traditional building materials and techniques should be used for the repair, replacement or improvement of heritage features. If modern materials or techniques are used, they should be time-tested and reversible.

### **New work**

- Major interventions, including new extensions, new developments and major alterations, should be in keeping with the proportions, material palette and character of the built heritage and the conservation area, but should be readily discernible as modern improvements.
- When assessing the appropriateness of interventions (alterations and new work), special consideration should be given to the preservation of rare or unusual features.
- New interventions (interior, exterior, landscape or vistas) need be considered in a framework of benefit, compared to harm/adverse impact to heritage character. If substantial adverse impacts are identified, the corresponding benefit must be significant to merit loss or damage to the heritage asset.
- If there is a proposal to rebuild lost built heritage, this work should only be undertaken if it will be truly authentic to the original, and documented with photographs, drawings and archival records. If it is not possible to recreate the lost heritage authentically, the bias should be towards a new design that is in keeping with the heritage character of Port Sunlight.

---

<sup>51</sup> Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. (c.6). London: The Stationery Office