



**Conservation
Management Plan**

2018 - 2028

**Executive
Summary**

**Conserving
the past,
planning
our future**



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Foreword

It may not be immediately evident in a village known for its well conserved period architecture and landscapes, but the one constant in Port Sunlight is change.

The Port Sunlight Conservation Management Plan outlines the history, significance, conditions, risks and plans for this unique 21st century community and heritage site. It guides us – PSVT and village stakeholders – in how we should go about managing change to ensure that what makes our village special will continue to do so for generations to come.



1 Introduction

William Lever had a strong sense of social responsibility.

It is what drove him to create Port Sunlight - his response to the poverty and desperation of Britain's late 19th-century working class.



The village was a way to improve the lives of his factory workers and their families, and in many ways it is still meeting Lever's aspirations. Architecturally-interesting buildings, open green spaces and tree-framed vistas still make Port Sunlight an uplifting place to live and work. Those

features, together with a fascinating history, also draw hundreds of thousands of tourists, students and life-long learners to the village every year.

Just as Lever and subsequent custodians of the village 'moved with the times', introducing change as it was needed while preserving the character of the village, so it falls to Port Sunlight Village Trust and to you, our village stakeholders, to meet similar challenges. We must make the most of the opportunities open to us while preserving what is so valuable about the village – those reasons why so many people still choose to live and visit here.



This Conservation Management Plan sets out Port Sunlight Village Trust's (PSVT) ten-year plan to do just that.

It celebrates the history, buildings, open spaces and community of the Port Sunlight Conservation Area, and describes our approach to managing, maintaining, conserving and enhancing the village. However, the plan builds in flexibility, and we will conduct annual reviews to assess our progress and to address the new challenges faced by this 21st-century community.

Our vision is:

“Port Sunlight, an inspiring place to live, work and visit.”

We hope you share this vision too.

What is Port Sunlight Village Trust?

Chances are that you have already been in touch with us, but if not PSVT is an independent charity founded in 1999 by Unilever plc. Our workforce of staff and volunteers is committed to preserving and promoting the Port Sunlight Conservation Area.

From PSVT's creation until April 2017, Unilever plc gave us an annual grant to support the maintenance and repair of the village. Unilever's aim was to help us to become a financially-independent organisation. This has been achieved, with our main source of income now from property rentals.

We invest nearly £2.5 million each year in many ways:

Operating Costs and Administration



In 2018, we launched a five-year strategic plan which outlines our ambitious new priorities, both for the organisation and the village.

Our mission:

“We are guardians of a unique and beautiful village, working with its community to ensure a great quality of life for residents and to celebrate William Lever’s amazing legacy through cultural and learning experiences for all.”

PSVT has five strategic aims for the coming years:

1. **Conserve and promote** Port Sunlight’s unique heritage in a sustainable way.
2. Be a **financially-strong and well-managed, independent charity.**
3. Deliver **high quality services** across the Port Sunlight estate.
4. Realise the potential of Port Sunlight as a **leading visitor attraction.**
5. Be a **brilliant place to work.**

The promotion and conservation of Port Sunlight’s unique heritage is central to our strategy, and this Conservation Management Plan underpins all areas of our business.

Why do we need a conservation management plan?

We need a plan because Port Sunlight is historically, socially and architecturally unique. As later sections of this plan describe, the village was founded in 1888 by

Lever and his brother who wanted to create decent, affordable housing for their soap factory workers.

The idea was not a new one, but where Port Sunlight differs is in the fusion of social goals, beautiful landscapes and Arts and Crafts-inspired architecture.

As custodians of this historic village and vibrant residential community, we are conscious of the need to implement policies and plans which respond to the current condition of the village’s heritage and the needs of the community. We also want to take account of changes in our operating environment; how people live and interact, changing economic circumstances, and organisational change.

Who is this plan for?

This plan is for everyone who has a stake in Port Sunlight, whether you live, work, learn or relax here. That includes external stakeholders such as Wirral Borough Council and Network Rail.

This is your village and PSVT cannot deliver this plan without your input and support.

Port Sunlight needs you to play your part.

What does the plan cover?

The plan covers the Port Sunlight Conservation Area and its heritage.

When we say ‘heritage’ we mean the fabric of the village – the buildings (inside and out), open spaces, formal gardens, memorials, monuments, items such as street furniture, and the archives and collections that document the village’s story.

PSVT owns many assets in the conservation area but not all. Our assets include:



293 residential buildings, including an Edwardian worker's cottage experience, community hub facility, and a holiday cottage



All formal gardens and open spaces



300 garages



1,350 trees



All monuments and memorials except the Founder's Tomb and those in Christ Church Cemetery



Front gardens, all residential, plus the frontages of PSVT-owned commercial and community buildings

16 commercial and community buildings, including:

- Hulme Hall
- Gladstone Theatre
- Lever Club
- The Lyceum
- Port Sunlight Garden Centre
- 93 & 95 Greendale Rd
- 23 King George's Drive
- Fire Engine Station
- EPF (Employee Purchase Facility) Shop
- Church Drive School
- Church Hall
- Boys' Brigade building
- Bowling Pavilion
- Landscape Depot
- Horticultural hut

More than two-thirds of the village buildings are privately owned.

Nearly all the privately-owned residential buildings (built before 1955) are Grade II listed, and PSVT has the benefit of restrictive covenants in their deeds which means owners must ensure they are well maintained.

Many of the commercial or community buildings are also listed and are included in this plan, along with 250 trees in Wirral Borough Council's ownership and the village public realm.

These buildings are *not* explicitly included in the plan:

- Lady Lever Art Gallery
- Christ Church
- Bridge Inn
- Tudor Rose Tea Room
- Darcy Court
- Osborne Court
- Birch Tree Manor
- Lever House and the Unilever Port Sunlight site
- Leverhulme Hotel
- Railway Inn

We have not identified specific risks or actions for these sites, however, PSVT provides all village stakeholders who have statutory obligations with support and guidance to protect our shared heritage. Therefore, our plan considers their roles, responsibilities and impact on the Conservation Area.

Who developed this plan and who was consulted in its production?

The Conservation Management Plan was written by PSVT's workforce. Our brief was to produce a practical document which will inform decision making across the organisation, guide the activities of our residents and support the work of key partners within and around the Conservation Area. Where necessary, specialist help was sought.

You are probably aware that in 2017 PSVT consulted widely with stakeholders to seek your views. This process reinforced much of what we knew but also raised new issues and opportunities for the heritage.

Your feedback shaped every aspect of this plan and our strategy for the future of Port Sunlight, and we hope that you can also share in its realisation.



Our plan addresses the improvements we need to make to better serve both the community and our visitors, while also protecting the heritage of the village, so our first priorities were:

- To better understand the condition of the heritage. We surveyed the village landscape (in our care), the residential properties and all monuments and memorials.
- To learn about the village residents and our visitors. We have developed a good understanding of our residents' current and future needs and of our visitors – who visits, why and what we can do to increase tourism to the village.

In some cases, our intelligence is not as detailed and up-to-date as we would like, especially regarding drainage concerns, public buildings and the roofs and interiors of all properties. However, we have addressed these gaps in our action plan which can be found in the main report.

If you only read this executive summary you will get a good idea of our plans. However, for a fuller picture it would be useful to read the complete Conservation Management Plan and PSVT's other 'heritage' policies which are available through our website. They go into much more detail about the challenges that face our village and how we can meet them together.

List of Port Sunlight Stakeholders

- PSVT staff, trustees, volunteers
- All residents - tenants and private owner occupiers
- Landlords – PSVT, private, Family Housing Association, Sanctuary Housing Association
- PSVT commercial tenants
- Garage tenants
- Wirral Borough Council
- Emergency services
- Church Drive School and other local primary & secondary schools
- Christ Church congregation, elders and United Reformed Church
- Visitors – all types and for all venues
- Commuters
- People who work in the village
- Community groups
- Contractors
- Historic England
- Local and national amenity societies
- Village businesses
- Unilever Port Sunlight corporate – Factory, Research & Development, and Core Services – and their employees
- Lady Lever Art Gallery
- United Utilities, Merseytravel, Network Rail, Stagecoach and Sky
- Conveyancing professionals
- Local further and higher education establishments
- Dog walkers
- Cyclists
- New Ferry and Lower Bebington - residents and businesses
- Politicians – local councillors and MP
- Port Sunlight River park

2 | A plan for our heritage

Protect, manage, increase, improve...

As well as the overall vision and strategic aims for Port Sunlight outlined earlier, PSVT has developed long-term heritage aims and objectives, based on the survey work undertaken.

We will use them to prioritise work, identify and allocate funds, and monitor progress. They will also guide the work of our volunteers, stakeholders and third-party contractors and consultants operating in the village.

A detailed action plan that expands on these heritage aims and objectives can be found in the main report, but to summarise they are:

Heritage Aims

1

Protect and conserve the character and appearance of Port Sunlight Conservation Area.

2

Manage change within and around the conservation area in a sustainable way.

3

Increase understanding of Port Sunlight's significance.

4

Improve access for people visiting, working and living in the Port Sunlight Conservation Area.



1. Protect and conserve the character and appearance of Port Sunlight Conservation Area.

Objectives:

1. Become a centre of excellence for heritage conservation, and champion best-practice materials, methods and standards.
2. Advocate for heritage skills and develop schemes to increase local access to qualified tradespeople and conveyancing professionals.
3. Deliver a coordinated and consistent programme of maintenance, conservation and improvement for all heritage.
4. Engage external stakeholders, both within the village and along its boundaries, to inspire and increase awareness of their role in the sustainability of Port Sunlight.
5. Develop and maintain public realm features that are appropriate for the conservation area.



2. Manage change within and around the conservation area in a sustainable way.

Objectives:

1. Work with Wirral Borough Council to resolve heritage enforcement issues.
2. Mitigate the impact of visitor activity on the community and the heritage.
3. Develop 21st-century facilities and services.
4. Ensure all new developments are in keeping with the proportions, palette and character of the conservation area, but discernible as modern improvements.
5. Improve PSVT's environmental credentials.
6. Ensure the successful implementation of an anti-social behaviour plan.



3. Increase understanding of Port Sunlight's significance.

Objectives:

1. Harness the value of Port Sunlight's heritage as a learning resource.
2. Raise the profile of Port Sunlight's unique heritage and PSVT's conservation work and their relevance to the modern world.
3. Tell the complete story of Port Sunlight's significance.
4. Develop Port Sunlight Museum's collection and archive to support PSVT's work.



4. Improve access for people visiting, working and living in the Port Sunlight Conservation Area.

Objectives:

1. Ensure accessibility is at the heart of everything we do.
2. Support elderly residents and those with disabilities to enjoy a good quality of life.
3. Ensure the successful implementation of a village transport strategy.
4. Continue to improve signage, information and wayfinding around the site.

What is the next step?

This plan will help us work towards a common goal which secures the future of our unique village. To reiterate, PSVT cannot deliver this vision alone. The village and its conservation area really do need all stakeholders to play their part, whether that is continuing to maintain their homes to a high standard or getting involved in community activities. Please read the rest of this document and think about how you fit into this plan. It gives some background to our vision by summarising Port Sunlight's story, explains why the village is so important, outlines the results of our condition survey, and details the risks and protections for the heritage. More detailed versions of each section can be found in the main report.



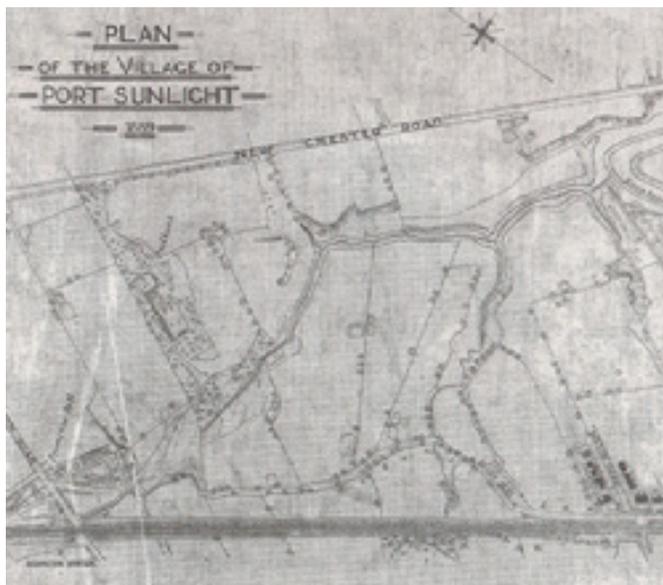
3 The history of Port Sunlight

A remarkable village that has never lost its character

1888

The founding of the village

The story begins in 1888 when William Lever (1851-1925) and his brother, James (1854-1910), founded Port Sunlight village to house the workers of their soap manufacturing firm, Lever Brothers (eventually becoming the global giant, Unilever). They had outgrown the site of their first works in Warrington and wanted a site that could accommodate both a new factory and a workers' village.



1888-97

Early development

The 56 acres Lever Brothers purchased in 1887 might have appeared a poor choice; marshy farmland, criss-crossed by tidal inlets from the River Mersey. However, it was accessible by river, rail and road, and there was available land nearby. There was also a ready supply of labour in New Ferry and Birkenhead.

Lever understood the importance of picturesque landscapes as both a setting for buildings and as healthy, green space for the community. Lever may

Lever's vision differed to earlier industrial model villages in that not only did he want to provide sanitary, affordable housing and good working conditions for his employees, but he also employed architects to create Arts and Crafts-style architecture, ornamental details and public art to achieve his philosophy of 'prosperity sharing'.

have had to build around the marshy spots and tidal inlets in the early parts of the village, but the resulting curved, irregular streets suited the Arts and Crafts influences which he adopted throughout the site.

William Lever's wife, Elizabeth, (1850-1913), cut the first sod at Port Sunlight on the 3rd March 1888. Work on the factory began soon afterwards, with the first boil of soap coming off the production line in 1889. Then the first houses were built in the south-west corner of the site (Bolton Road and Greendale Road) and included an entrance lodge and cottages. In 1892, Lever Brothers bought more land. Housing and community spaces such as the Lyceum (1894-96) were built along the banks of a drained and landscaped tidal channel now known as The Dell.



1898-1910

Expansion

At the turn of the century business was booming, so Lever expanded again, introducing recreational facilities including Hulme Hall (1901) and an open-air swimming baths (1902). By 1910, further housing developments had been completed, as were community facilities such as the gymnasium (1903), open-air theatre (1903) and Christ Church (1902-04).



1910-21

A new plan

Until 1910, Port Sunlight had expanded to follow the lines of the landscape, however, that changed with the filling of the tidal channel basins, allowing axial and linear development. A competition held at the Liverpool School of Architecture and Civic Design resulted in an expansion and redevelopment plan for the village, with the École des Beaux Arts-influenced axial layout of The Diamond and The Causeway still forming the village centrepiece today.

On the 3rd December 1921, the War Memorial was officially unveiled in the centre of the village, commemorating the 512 Lever Brothers employees who died during the Great War.



1922

The interwar period

On 16th December 1922, the Lady Lever Art Gallery was opened by HRH Princess Beatrice. It was constructed to house Lever's own art collection, and in its first year more than 100,000 people visited. The gallery was named to honour Lever's wife who had died in 1913. Lever himself died on 7th May 1925 and was entombed next to his wife in Christ Church. The Leverhulme Memorial was built on a site to the west of the art gallery.

Development of the village continued after Lever's death. In 1933-34, the monumental arch and adjacent terraced garden at the south end of The Diamond designed by architect James Lomax-Simpson were completed, and Jubilee Crescent was built in 1938 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the Port Sunlight works and village. Despite the ongoing development and maintenance work in the village, the 1930s were witness to some of the village's most dramatic alterations. Several landmark sites were demolished, including the bandstand (demolished 1932) in The Diamond.



1939

The Second World War

Port Sunlight did not escape damage during the Second World War, resulting in a major repair and rebuilding strategy which continued until 1951. A lack of man power during the war meant that the village landscape also suffered, so after the war areas of the landscape were reconstructed, with new trees and shrubs planted, and front lawns and formal bedding introduced. This all led to a period of landscaping excellence in the village.



1965-98

Modernisation and sale

In April 1965, nearly all of the houses and community or commercial buildings in Port Sunlight were nationally listed at Grade II for their architectural or historic interest.

The listing description notes that at the time, Port Sunlight was “a complete and virtually unaltered museum-piece of planning and architecture, unique of its kind, in the country”. This was about to change.

By the 1960s, Unilever had grown so large that Port Sunlight no longer represented a link between the company and its workforce. A new company was set up to manage Port Sunlight; Unilever Merseyside Limited (UML), which carried out an extensive modernisation programme in the village. More than 700 houses were altered, and allotments were subdivided to provide back gardens for individual houses and garage blocks.

A change in Unilever’s business priorities in the late 1970s and early 1980s resulted in the sale of Port Sunlight village houses. In 1979 tenants were given the option to buy their properties; the first time the houses had ever been sold. The 1970s also saw a downturn in the quality of the village landscape; labour costs had risen, profit margins were squeezed, and Dutch elm disease hit the village. It was the mid-1980s before tree numbers recovered.

Port Sunlight was designated as a conservation area in March 1978, and the principal planning objectives for the area were included in Wirral Borough Council’s Unitary Development Plan.



1999 to the present

Port Sunlight Village Trust

The increasing costs of maintaining a historic village contributed to the transfer of all Unilever's village assets to the newly formed Port Sunlight Village Trust (PSVT) in April 1999. Tied tenancies also ended at this date.

Since then, PSVT has worked to conserve the village's heritage, to promote the village and its founder, to support residents in the care of their homes, and to work with stakeholders to celebrate Port Sunlight. It has also succeeded in finding new uses for public buildings which had fallen into disrepair.

PSVT has restored monuments and memorials in its care, and heavily invested in the repair and improvement of buildings and landscapes. Notable achievements include restoration of the war memorial and restoration and adaptive use of Hesketh Hall. Other village stakeholders have had their own conservation success stories including houses in private ownership that have been lovingly restored, adaptations at Christ Church to meet community needs, and the recent refurbishment of the south galleries at the Lady Lever Art Gallery.

Today

Port Sunlight's landscapes, architecture, fine decorations and monuments are remarkably intact, and the village's story can be seen in every facet of its fabric.

It is important that we retain this unique heritage while adapting for current and future needs, which is the vision described in the rest of this plan.



4 The significance of Port Sunlight

The village is truly packed with architectural, social, historic and commemorative significance for many different people.

Port Sunlight's layout and architecture

The features that immediately strike visitors to the village are its architecture and park-like setting. It was Lever's interest in architecture and his friendships with many architects which informed his vision for Port Sunlight, and he was heavily involved in its design. The range of architects, artists and craftsmen he employed is reflected in the buildings, decorative detailing and sculptural features found throughout the village.

Outwardly, the 'public' front of the buildings are decorative, with high-quality construction and detailing. However, the 'private' rear of the buildings can be more stark and repetitive. Lever created a 'block' system where the fronts of houses formed a perimeter around an internal courtyard of rear gardens and allotments that the public would not see.

None of the blocks are identical, with more than 30 architectural practices involved in the design of the village.

Internally, Port Sunlight cottages were built to adhere to a standard layout and plan - either kitchen cottages, with a kitchen and scullery on the ground floor and three bedrooms above, or a parlour cottage with a kitchen, parlour and scullery on the ground floor and three or four bedrooms above.

Overall, the architectural style for the village - its character - is an 'English cottage vernacular' using traditional building materials, sometimes creating a 'mock Tudor' effect. The impression is comfortable and cosy which some have called 'Olde English'.

While the village has many remarkable, fascinating and beautiful features, its greatest importance is that for the first time it offered a vision of a workers' settlement based on picturesque principles.

This was without the grid plans and long regimented terraces of earlier schemes, and was due to the challenging nature of the site and to Port Sunlight's founder, William Lever.

The significance of Port Sunlight's founder

Lever's motivation for the establishment of the village was driven both by the needs of his business and by a highly developed social conscience. He believed that housing problems could be addressed by private enterprises, like Lever Brothers.

Lever had ambitions to become an architect, but his father insisted that he enter the family grocery business on leaving school at the age of 16. As a result, he immersed himself in the planning and construction of Port Sunlight. His architectural interests extended beyond Port Sunlight. He purchased the nearby village of Thornton Hough, building housing to accommodate his workers, together with a school, church, shop and social club. He also established a Chair of Civic Design for Liverpool University's School of Architecture.

Lever's social impact also reached beyond the village. While sitting as a Liberal MP, he was involved in the introduction of old age pensions (which had already been adopted by Lever Brothers), created the 'Sunlight' soap brand - bringing cleanliness to the masses - and endowed the School of Tropical Medicine at Liverpool University. He also bought the Western Isles of Lewis and Harris, intending to capitalise on fishing and fish processing industries in the region and to transform economic and social conditions for local people.



Port Sunlight: a social experiment

Lever had seen the appalling living and working conditions in the UK in the second half of the 19th century and created Port Sunlight to provide workers with comfortable homes and gardens so that they might flourish and contribute to society. He developed a system called 'Prosperity Sharing' which provided his workers' families with sanitary housing, green open space, sports facilities, access to healthcare and education, and leisure opportunities. Lever did not see this as a philanthropic act; it was simply the correct way in which to conduct business. To improve relations with his workforce, Lever also introduced a co-partnership scheme, allowing all employees to share in the profits of the business.

Port Sunlight differed from earlier 'model villages' in the social institutions Lever provided, and the size and quality of design. There are still many community buildings, including assembly halls, schools, a pub and an art gallery, as well as shops and sporting facilities, clubs and village institutions.

Good living conditions were matched by the factory working conditions, which were superior for their time and described as a model of efficiency and employee safety. Lever also introduced a free life policy for employees which included sick pay. In almost every case the 'Port Sunlight experiment' produced exceptional social results, so much so that the death rate in the village was almost exactly half that of Liverpool on the opposite side of the Mersey.

The village's influence on the Garden City Movement

Port Sunlight was a major influence on the Garden City Movement, which in turn influenced much early 20th-century planning. This influence was particularly seen in the early development of Letchworth and Hampstead Garden Suburb, in which Lever played a role, then in the spread of garden cities and new towns across the country. Even today the legacy continues, for in 2017 the UK Government announced its intention to build 14 new garden villages in Britain, drawing on the success of places like Port Sunlight.

International recognition

Visitors came to the village from early on (posters advertising tours of the works and village were displayed at railway stations around the country). The village was widely acclaimed in books and journals home and abroad, and reproductions of Port Sunlight cottages were erected at several international exhibitions.

The influence of American design

The monumental, classically-inspired architecture and axial arrangement of The Diamond and The Causeway show the influence of American planning and design popular at the turn of the 20th century. Lever was a regular visitor to the USA and an admirer of its architecture and aesthetic movements, particularly those which connected civic beauty with morality.

Landscape design

Port Sunlight is a shining example of a planned village where the landscape is on a par with the architecture, reflecting Lever's own passion for garden design. The landscape sets off the architecture while also providing leisure space. The village remains a nationally and internationally significant example of early 20th-century planning and landscape architecture, and reflects a change in emphasis from dense and picturesque late Victorian landscaping to École des Beaux Arts ideals.

It fuses English cottage garden design with grander, more formal civic planning, with influences also coming from France and the US.

Art and advertising

Lever was a pioneer of modern advertising, with his passion for art beginning while collecting artwork to promote Sunlight Soap. He bought paintings he knew would appeal to his biggest consumer market - housewives - had them copied and added the Sunlight branding. The village itself also became an advert for the product it was named after, with posters advertising tours of the works and village displayed at railway stations.

As he grew richer and more confident, Lever's art collection expanded from business to pleasure. He was a passionate believer in the beneficial influence of art and good design on everyday life. To this end, he housed most of his painting, porcelain and furniture collections in the Lady Lever Art Gallery, making one of the most important private art collections in the world available to the public, and commissioned public sculpture from the leading artists of the day.

A feat of civil engineering

Port Sunlight is a testament to civil engineering expertise overcoming challenging site conditions. The village was built on a series of tidal inlets, marshland and sloping ground. Lever Brother's civil engineering team made substantial changes to the flow of water in the village, damming the main channel and diverting other flows through a series of culverts which still run under the village roads.

Commemorative and spiritual meaning

There are 17 historically and aesthetically-important monuments, memorials and plaques in the village, most of which are nationally listed. The most significant is the Grade I-listed War Memorial, commemorating the lives of Lever Brothers' employees and village residents lost in the two world wars. Lever himself is buried at Christ Church, which he dedicated to the memory of his parents. The Hillsborough Memorial, formerly the Jubilee Gardens, is a peaceful garden of remembrance for the 96 Liverpool football fans who tragically lost their lives at the Hillsborough stadium in 1989.



Port Sunlight's collections and archives

The village is significant for maintaining three unique and valuable on-site collections and archives. They are held by Unilever Archives and Records Management (UARM), Lady Lever Art Gallery and Port Sunlight Village Trust.

Port Sunlight today

More than 2,000 people live in Port Sunlight, and each has an important role to play in the conservation and development of their village. It is studied extensively by students of all ages, from Key Stage 1 children learning about Victorian times, through to doctoral research into the founder himself.

No doubt you will have seen Port Sunlight in films and on TV, but you might not know that The Beatles' first performance with Ringo Starr was here.

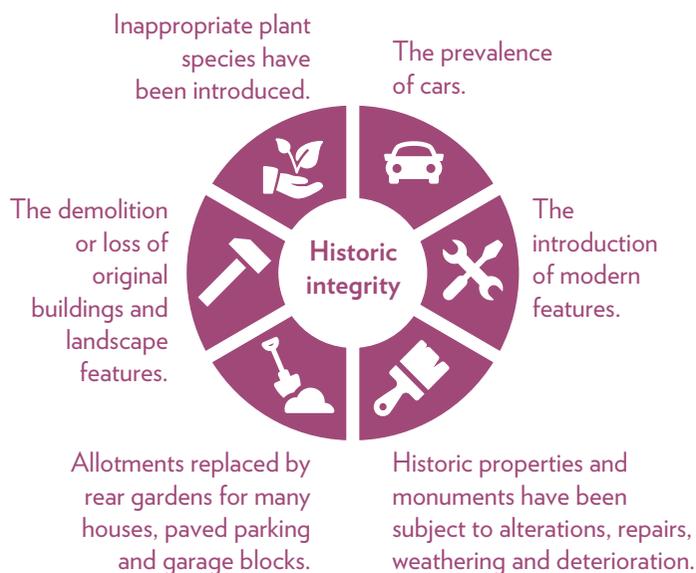
The village is still considered the spiritual home of Unilever (formerly Lever Brothers) which employs more than 2,000 staff at Port Sunlight. Ultimately it is a reminder of how social ideals, good design and access to open green space can transform lives. For the 300,000 visitors, both domestic and international, who come to the village each year Port Sunlight has all the above significances and more.

5 Condition of our heritage

In many ways, the village has changed very little over the years. It retains its architectural charm, community environment and open green spaces, and is a testament to the work and commitment of its many stakeholders.

However, in areas its integrity and character have been altered or have deteriorated. As you read this section it may be useful to think about your impact on the village and how you can contribute in future – every little bit really does count.

Comparisons with historic maps and photographs reveal changes to village features over time:



Assessing the conditions

We undertook a condition survey of the village, looking at listed houses built before 1950, the landscape, monuments and memorials. We needed to understand the condition of Port Sunlight's heritage assets, and how to prioritise work to address deterioration, inappropriate work and enforcement issues.

The general condition

Houses:

Erosion of building materials and inappropriate alterations are the greatest risks to heritage. Of the 918 properties surveyed, 552 need repair work, ranging from minor decoration to major structural repairs. There are 405 instances over 251 properties where a high priority repair is required within the next three years to prevent significant heritage loss. These high priority works include structural cracks, missing/damaged roof tiles and erosion of brick and stone (walls). However, around 40% of houses need no repairs at all, and 44% of the work required is of a low priority.

Green open spaces:

Some of the green spaces, away from public frontages, are of more limited recreational value. These areas may offer the opportunity to increase biodiversity, without negatively impacting on the heritage or recreational value of the site.

Trees and planting:

Many trees are now too large, others are in too small an area, hiding important views and impacting on buildings. There are also cases of inappropriate plant species, due to their eventual size and high maintenance requirements, as well as areas of patchy planting that may require rejuvenation.

Commercial or community buildings:

A cyclical survey plan of repair works is required.

Public realm:

The condition and styles of these features is mixed, eg lamp posts, public paths, signage and benches. Shared ownership and the lack of an overarching strategy or vision have resulted in differing approaches to design and maintenance.

Monuments & memorials:

High priority actions were recorded for The Dell Bridge, the Mill Stone, the Leverhulme Memorial, the Jubilee Garden arch, the boating pond, The Founder's Tomb and the Silver Wedding Anniversary Fountain. Medium priority actions were recommended for the Jubilee Garden balustrade, stonework and drains, Victoria Bridge's stones and marker and Gladstone Theatre's bronze plaque. Low priority actions were required for all other monuments in the village.

Access:

PSVT considered how well the village complies with The Equality Act (2010) and found access ramps in poor condition, steps and paving without visible edges, inaccessible entry points to some public spaces, and challenges for residents with reduced mobility.

Port Sunlight Village Trust bears a responsibility to preserve, maintain and promote Port Sunlight. There are several protections and policies in place to assist us, helping us to manage the changes required to make this a 21st-century village fit for our residents and visitors. They establish standards and guidelines, stabilise and improve property values, and protect the character, setting and appearance of the village.



Port Sunlight has three tiers of protection:



1. Listed building designations

Most of the houses and buildings in Port Sunlight are nationally designated as Grade II listed, and almost all monuments and memorials are either Grade II, II* or Grade I.



2. Conservation area designation

The entire village is a conservation area. These are “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”. This designation also protects Port Sunlight’s trees, the front of properties and the wider setting.



3. Restrictive covenants

Covenants, held by PSVT, are in the title deeds for residential properties in Port Sunlight and essentially require owners to keep their properties in good repair and to obtain consent from PSVT before making any alterations.

Local planning policies

An area-specific planning policy regarding the preservation and enhancement of the character of the Port Sunlight Conservation Area has been included in Wirral Borough Council's adopted Unitary Development Plan (UDP) since February 2000. At the time of publishing, the Council was scheduled to deliver an updated draft Local Plan under Regulation 19 in 2019, with a view to adoption in early 2021. The Port Sunlight policy will be retained in the new Local Plan.

There are also general policies for:

- Protection of heritage
- Development affecting listing buildings and structures
- Development affecting conservation areas
- Demolition control within conservation areas
- Development affecting scheduled ancient monuments, non-scheduled remains and the preservation of historic parks and gardens.

Enforcement

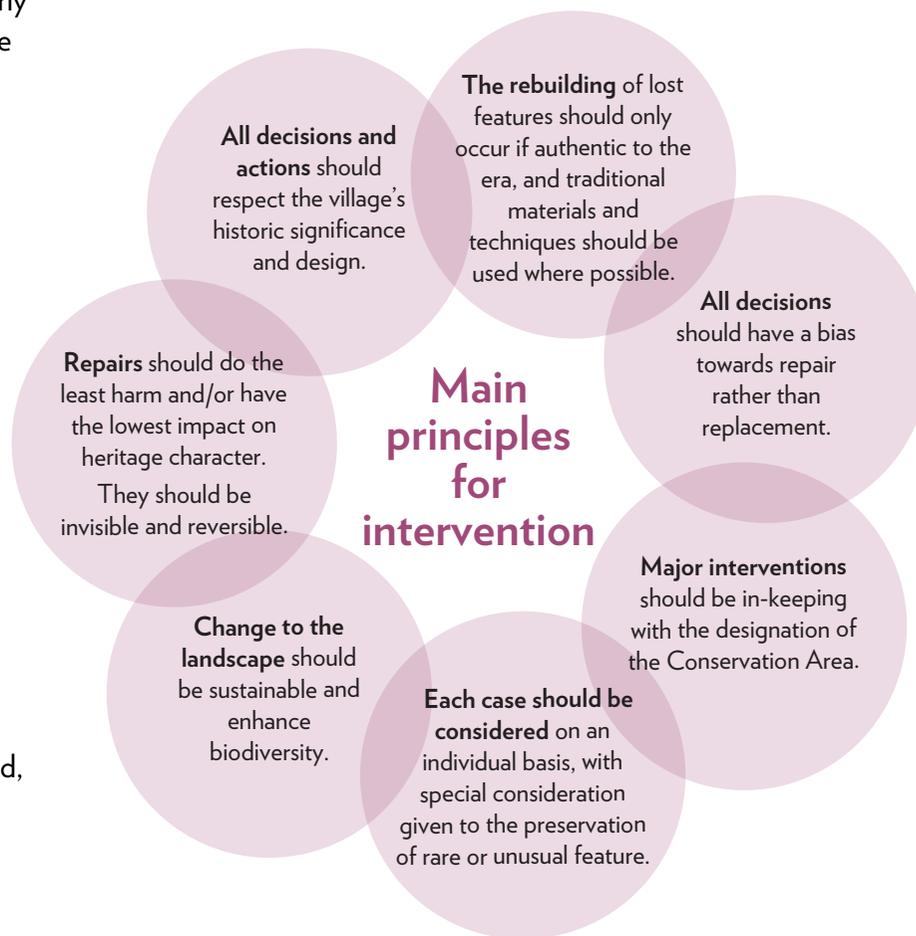
Wirral Borough Council is empowered to take the appropriate enforcement action when breaches of planning policy have taken place. Advice is provided, and if not heeded legal action can be taken and fines levied.

Heritage policy initiative

The Local Listed Building Consent Order (LLBCO) streamlines the consent process for the most common classes of work in the village. These include the appropriate installation of satellite dishes, and the replacement of severely deteriorated or inappropriate rear windows, rear doors and yard gates. Contact us if you need help in this area.

PSVT's heritage policies

PSVT has its own policies to protect and sustainably manage our landscape and built heritage. These policies guide and inform decision-making regarding maintenance, repair and new work, and seek to ensure PSVT staff and contractors work consistently.



Want to find out more?

These protections and policies can also help our residents to make appropriate adaptations to their properties. You can download PSVT's heritage policies from our website or contact us directly for advice – **we are here to help.**

7 Risks to our heritage

There are many threats to Port Sunlight's heritage. They are the result of decisions and actions by the current generation, our predecessors, stakeholders, the climate and simple ageing. No single factor or party is solely to blame, and many of the dangers outlined can be addressed, but we must work together to tackle these issues and reduce the risks. Again, consult our website or get in touch if you have any concerns, ideas or queries.

Erosion or loss of the village's heritage character.

This includes inappropriate alterations and repairs, natural weathering and the demolition of buildings and landscape features.

An incomplete understanding of the history, significance and integrity of Port Sunlight and all associated connections.

Decisions on the maintenance and management of buildings (including their interiors), the landscape, monuments and memorials have often been made without understanding the significance of the site or the impact of decisions and actions.

Difficulty in maintaining a sustainable, ecological environment, balancing advances in green technology with the protection and care of heritage assets in Port Sunlight.

Technological advances present opportunities for appropriate thermal improvements to historic buildings, for reducing our reliance on fossil fuels and for increasing biodiversity in the village. However, a balance needs to be struck to preserve the traditional building materials and appearance of the village.

A lack of understanding regarding the statutory policies and protections for heritage.

There is confusion over the restrictions in place for alterations to listed buildings, registered landscapes and listed monuments and memorials, and about the nature and boundaries of the restrictive covenant.

The inconsistent management of boundaries.

The conservation area's landscape is important to the heritage of the village. Inappropriate fencing and gates have eroded the character of the inner green spaces. Incongruous developments beyond the conservation area boundary also impact on the character and appearance of Port Sunlight and its setting, as do neglected areas on the village edge.

A lack of understanding regarding the role of Port Sunlight Village Trust (PSVT).

PSVT does not work alone to care for the village. Several key stakeholders, including private owner-occupiers, Wirral Borough Council and Merseyrail, also play a large part in its care and improvement. People have unreasonable expectations regarding PSVT's role and misunderstand the restrictions in place, creating a risk to the heritage.

A shortage of local tradespeople with heritage skills.

There is an over-reliance on a small pool of heritage skills contractors working in the village. This shortage leads to delays in starting work, reduces competition and is not sustainable.

Port Sunlight's suitability for 21st-century living, balancing the differing needs of an ageing population with those of families and young people.

There is often a conflict between modern living and the restrictions of living in a Grade II-listed terraced house in a conservation area. There are challenges for all residents, but especially for people with reduced mobility or growing families.

Gaps in knowledge over the condition of the heritage.

We do not currently know the liability of our stock, either internally or externally. No recent surveying of commercial or community buildings or hydrology has been carried out.

Different resources available to and priorities of the village's stakeholders.

There are lots of stakeholders who have influence on the future of Port Sunlight, but they do not necessarily share the same aims or objectives for the village.

The relatively high cost of maintaining historic properties.

Some owner-occupiers cannot afford to maintain and repair their properties, potentially resulting in dilapidation and heritage loss. Council cuts, a lack of government financial support, and the end of the Unilever covenant make the situation more challenging.

Balancing the development of Port Sunlight as a visitor destination whilst preserving the unique heritage of the village.

If the development of the village as a tourist destination is not managed successfully it could have harmful effects on the fabric which forms Port Sunlight's unique heritage, as well as on residents themselves.



Adoption and review

The Conservation Management Plan was formally adopted by the PSVT Board of Trustees in February 2018 and by Wirral Borough Council (TBC).

PSVT will monitor progress against the action plan monthly.

Our policies and action plan will be reviewed annually to inform our budgets and maintenance and repair programmes. An interim review of the plan will take place in 2023, with a full review and update in 2028.

What should you do next?

Do you feel inspired to contribute?

You have now read our conservation plans for Port Sunlight, and hopefully understand the rationale behind our heritage policy, aims and objectives, and our vision for the future of the village. We hope that it reflects your thoughts and concerns, and that you feel inspired to contribute to the vision expressed here.

For further details please visit our website portsunlightvillage.com where you can download the Conservation Management Plan including the Action Plan which describes how we will achieve our aims. If you have a specific issue, please get in touch with us. We are happy to provide free advice and guidance.

Port Sunlight's heritage is our shared responsibility and the village needs you to get involved.

portsunlightvillage.com