



COMMISSIONING BRIEF:

Strategy for Port Sunlight's Garage Sites

1. Introduction

Port Sunlight Village Trust (PSVT) wishes to appoint a team of consultants to deliver a plan for the future use of six of PSVT's garage sites. The garage sites represent a declining asset in their current form. They are at the end of their natural lifespan, are no longer used for the purpose for which they were intended, serve only a small proportion of village residents, and have reached the limit of their income potential.

The six garage sites represent a proportion of the total number of garage sites in the village and are in the worst condition. The plans developed as part of this commission will form a blueprint for all of the village garage sites over time. Some of the garage sites have adjoining green spaces. Where these are present, they should form part of the proposals for the garage sites.

The emphasis of this commission is on deliverable plans. We want a small suite of options to be developed and fully costed for each of the six sites. The intention is to choose from the options and implement a solution for each of the six garage sites over the next 5 years starting in 2026/27.

2. About Port Sunlight

Port Sunlight was founded in 1888 by industrialist William Lever. He wanted to provide the employees of his new Lever Brothers soap works and their families with decent and affordable housing and a wide range of facilities, services, policies, and incentives to ensure their well-being and 'betterment'.

Port Sunlight is not the first example of an industrial worker village, but it is one of the finest surviving examples in the world. It was an immediate precursor to and a model for the Garden City movement and influenced the design of planned worker settlements, garden villages and garden suburbs around the world from the turn of the twentieth century to the present day.

Lever Brothers became Unilever in 1929 following a merger with the Margarine Union. Today, Port Sunlight is an advanced manufacturing hub for Unilever and a centre for the company's Home Care and Beauty & Personal Care Research & Development. The company considers Port Sunlight its historic home in the UK.

Port Sunlight is a Conservation Area and most residential properties, public buildings and monuments are Grade II listed. The war memorial is Grade I listed. These provisions provide statutory protection for the village enforced by the local planning authority (LPA) Wirral Council. The council are also responsible for transport and the maintenance of pavements and roads in the village. Further protection is provided through restrictive covenants in the title deeds of all residential property. Two sections of the landscape – The Dell, and The

Diamand and The Causeway - are included in Historic England's register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. Ten of Port Sunlight's green spaces are also designated for protection as Urban Greenspace by Wirral Council.

The village is home to approximately 2,000 residents, a mixture of owner-occupiers and private tenants, living in 1,059 residential properties.

According to Place Informatics Town Visitor Data, the Port Sunlight Conservation Area boundary had a footfall of just over 1 million people in 2024. We estimate this breaks down as follows:

- Approximately 300,000 day-visitors, of which roughly 200,000 visited the Lady Lever Art Gallery (part of National Museums Liverpool), in the region of 30,000 engaged in PSVT activities including events, school workshops, guided tours, and visiting Port Sunlight Museum, with the remainder visiting The Bridge Inn, Port Sunlight Garden Centre, and The Gladstone Theatre.
- Port Sunlight also receives a high level of casual visitors, approximately 700,000, who come for a variety of reasons, including dog-walking, attending Christ Church, participating in village clubs and societies, for work and business meetings, visiting friends and family members, attending the village school, and commuting via Merseyrail to nearby Chester, Liverpool and Manchester.

3. About Port Sunlight Village Trust (PSVT)

PSVT is an independent charity founded in 1999 by Unilever Plc. Our vision is to make Port Sunlight 'an environmentally conscious and socially vibrant place, where residents are happy and engaged, visitors are captivated, and everyone can learn from its stories'. Our mission, 'PSVT is the charity that keeps Port Sunlight relevant, working with village residents and other partners to tell stories, care for historic collections, buildings, and landscapes, and create an inviting place for people to live, work and visit.'

PSVT is directly responsible for:

- A diverse group of monuments (listed and unlisted).
- A permanent museum collection and village archive.
- All landscapes within the Conservation Area except the back gardens of houses but including the large green spaces to the rear of the properties.
- 292 Grade II-listed houses, equating to approximately one-third of the housing stock.
- 22 non-residential/community buildings including The Stables, The Lyceum and Hulme Hall. Some of these buildings have tenants, both community and commercial, others are used by PSVT for its own activities.
- All garages within the village of which there are currently 309. PSVT is also responsible for the rear service road areas where the garage sites are located.
- Port Sunlight Museum & Gift Shop, including the Worker's Cottage, learning experience SoapWorks, and The Gallery at Bridge Cottage.

It also works with partners and stakeholders to:

- Tackle social issues and promote community cohesion.
- Manage the visitor destination and raise its profile.
- Provide conservation advice to homeowners.

PSVT employs approximately 50 members of staff and works with organisational and community volunteers to discharge its charitable objectives. We are governed by a voluntary

Board of Trustees with expertise in housing, surveying, finance, conservation, landscape, planning, museums, and heritage.

Village residents contribute to our work, decision-making and village life through a formalised resident engagement structure that includes a number of resident advisory groups and two residents with relevant expertise serve on the PSVT Board.

4. The Garage Sites

Number

PSVT owns and is responsible for all garages within the Port Sunlight Conservation Area. A total of 323 garages were built in Port Sunlight. They were built in clusters to the rear of some of the superblocs, occupying 21 individual 'sites'. In May 2025, 14 garages were demolished as part of an improvement programme affecting 193 of the original garages, leaving the total number of garages in Port Sunlight at 309.

History

Between 1965 and 1976, garages, service roads, grassed areas, and longer back gardens for individual properties, replaced all but one of the allotment sites that had previously occupied the rear courtyard space behind Port Sunlight's cottages. It was part of a modernisation programme carried out by the Estates Department of Unilever Merseyside Limited (which became UML in 1968) from 1963 and included the comprehensive renovation of a significant proportion of the cottages. The overarching aim of the programme was to respond to modern living expectations – for example, increasing car ownership and the decline in demand for allotments - and to reduce ongoing maintenance costs for the company. It took some 20 years to complete and is described in *A Guide to Port Sunlight Village* by Edward Hubbard and Michael Shippobottom as 'a pioneering village conservation scheme' of the time.

Design and construction

Most of the garages are constructed of pre-cast concrete and asbestos sheeting, with no access to electricity. They were designed with a lifespan of 50 years. They were intended for the storage of a single motor car from the period in which they were constructed. The design and layout did not consider two car families, on-street parking or the parking of company vehicles such as vans, all of which would be considerations today.

Use

The garages were originally used to store motor vehicles. Over the last 50 years since their introduction, not only have motor cars increased in size but the way in which people live and function in their homes has changed. A comprehensive resident survey carried out in 2024 found that only 51 garage tenants used their garage to store a car.

They remain popular, however. In 2025 PSVT had no empty garages of a lettable standard and maintained a waiting list of applicants. Today, they are largely used for storage. In the same resident survey, 71 garage tenants said they used their garage for household storage. This not only represents a breach of their tenancy agreement but also indicates that our garages are no longer fit for purpose.

Tenancies are open to both residents and non-residents. Currently, non-residents make-up one-third of PSVT's garage tenants.

Income

Monthly rental for each garage is £39.00, (£468 per annum). The maximum income when all garages are let is £151,000 per year, which is in line with rents charged by other landlords. The actual income achieved is lower due to void periods and some garages being used by PSVT.

Maintenance

In the last 3 years maintenance of the garages has cost approximately £40,000, incorporating reactive low-cost day-to-day repairs, low cost planned maintenance including new roofs, rainwater goods and doors, and asbestos surveys.

Recent changes in asbestos handling rules have accelerated the rate at which the garages are becoming too costly to repair and there are currently 12 garages that are out of use. This number will increase over the coming years as more garages reach the end of their life.

In 2023, architect Paddock Johnson Partnership undertook a condition survey of all garages in Port Sunlight. The condition of the garages was found to range from very poor to good. Overall, the survey showed the continued decline in the condition of the garages and it was estimated that over £1 million needed to be spent on the existing stock to bring it up to an acceptable standard.

Governance

For years, PSVT has wrestled with the question of what to do with the garage sites. In that time, a number of pieces of work have been commissioned, all of which have contributed to the eventual strategy and will provide useful ideas and intelligence for this commission. These studies have considered the needs of residents, the development potential of the sites, and opportunities for biodiversity especially when combined with the rear green spaces, which are currently underused by residents. The development options included the building of community workspaces, storage units, and single and two storey residential properties.

In PSVT's 3-year strategic plan 2025 – 2028, the organisation has committed to addressing the garage sites. One of the 10 strategic objectives is to: "develop and implement a sustainable solution to Port Sunlight's garage sites and rear green spaces that elevates their use, improves amenities, and supports resident engagement and environmental sustainability."

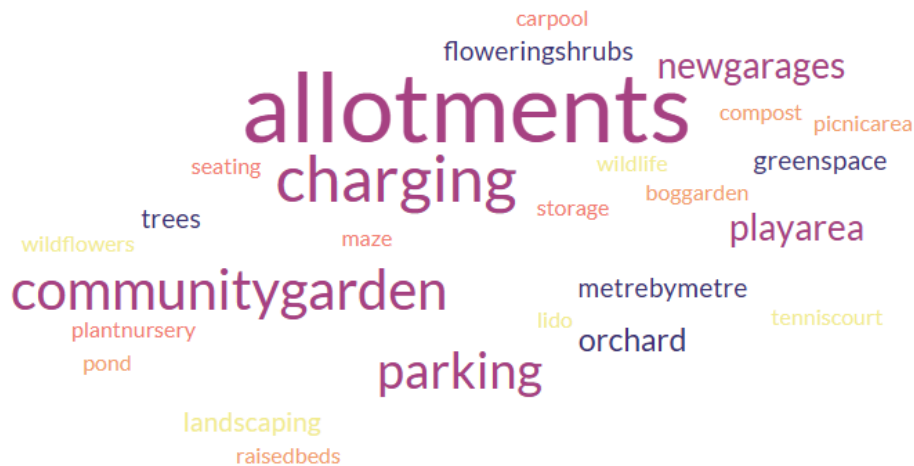
In the first instance, PSVT has identified seven garage sites for demolition and improvement over the next six years. Where there are rear green spaces, these will be incorporated into the schemes of work. The seven sites have been prioritized on a 'worst first' basis, they are in the worst condition from a health and safety perspective and are no longer fit for purpose. They include:

Year	Garage Site	No. of Garages	Cost of demolition
2025/26	11-35 Lower Road	25	£31,250
2026/27	1-40 Corniche Road	28	£35,000

2027/28	41-68 Corniche Road	30	£37,500
2028/29	1-10 Corniche Road, 4-16 Bebington Road	22	£27,500
2029/30	17-28 Bebington Road, 29-40 Bebington Road	24	£30,000
2030/31	1-50 Pool Bank	50	£62,500

14 garages behind Greendale Road were demolished in May 2025. This action was taken without consultation due to urgent health and safety concerns. The area is now being used as a pilot study for informal resident parking and plans are being developed with residents to create a community garden in part of the space. 25 garages behind Lower Road are scheduled for demolition in January 2026 but a programme of work is yet to be drawn up.

Apart from the demolition of the Greendale Road garages, all village residents have had the opportunity contribute to consultation concerning the demolition and future use of the sites identified as priority areas over the next five years. There are some clear themes, mainly related to allotments, community gardens and parking.



However, there is no single overriding proposal and nothing that would result in new income streams for PSVT.

5. The commission

PSVT is working with village residents to build a masterplan for the village, which will set out how its green spaces and buildings will be used in order to fulfill its mission and vision for Port Sunlight.

We need to appoint a consultant or group of consultants to develop detailed proposals for the six garage sites listed in the table above. These plans must include three options for consideration, including retaining the garages, along with the scale of costs for each option. Where they exist, rear green spaces should be incorporated into the plans. The outputs must be deliverable from a time and cost perspective and be fundraising ready.

The proposals must:

- Support the needs and interests of village residents as a priority.

- Consider ways to improve Port Sunlight’s contribution to combatting climate change.
- Contribute positively to Port Sunlight’s heritage including reducing the dominance of vehicles in the street scene.

Where possible, proposals should incorporate any income generation opportunities for PSVT and village residents. Proposals must not harm the heritage value of the village.

During the commission, all research and previous studies that have incorporated the garage and green space sites will be made available. These include:

- The findings of the most recent resident survey, Have Your Say 2024.
- Biodiversity Survey and Improvement Plan by The Environment Partnership.
- Garage Surveys and Development Proposals by Paddock Johnson Partnership.
- Public Realm Strategy by Planit.
- Environmental Sustainability Strategy by The Environment Partnership.
- Asset & Property Income Generation Strategy by Creative Heritage.

There will also be opportunities to engage village residents.

6. Scope of Works

Below is a summary of the scope of works for the commission.

- A. Review and agree the scope of the brief with members of the Project Team.
- B. Complete a desktop review of relevant PSVT policies, plans, surveys, and strategies, along with the plans and policies of other key stakeholders which are relevant to this commission.
- C. Benchmark PSVT’s garage sites with other similar sites.
- D. Consider the heritage value of each of the 6 sites, including adjoining green spaces, working with PSVT’s heritage team.
- E. Develop 3 options for each site providing detailed cost information for each.
- F. Deliver an interim report for PSVT’s Board Meeting in February 2026 and a final report by May 2026.
- G. Undertake any consultation with village residents as and when necessary.
- H. Ensure the project always complies with the Data Protection Act 2018 and adheres to PSVT policies and procedures in this regard.

7. Skills and Experience

We believe that to deliver this piece of work successfully you will need a team with expertise in urban and landscape design, significant experience of working in an historic environment, and demonstrable skills in engaging stakeholders. Evidence of appropriate insurance, including Public Liability Insurance, will be a requirement.

8. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

PSVT is actively working to be a diverse and inclusive organisation. As part of PSVT’s commissioning practice, we welcome submissions from people who are from the Global Ethnic Majority, Disabled, Neurodiverse, D/deaf, LGBTQ+, and/or from working-class backgrounds.

9. Budget

A budget of £15,000 + VAT has been assigned to this commission.

The total cost of the works presented to PSVT as part of the response to the brief should include all costs of delivery. PSVT can support some costs, e.g. venues to host meetings and community engagement activity, and marketing via PSVT social media channels, quarterly village newsletter, and stakeholder e-blasts.

10. Reporting relationships

You will report to Katherine Lynch, Director of Projects at Port Sunlight Village Trust. The Project Team is also likely to include:

- Paul Harris, CEO
- Mike Ward, Chief Commercial Officer & CEO Designate
- Lin Whalley, Director of Operations

11. Application method

You are invited to submit a proposal that must demonstrate the following:

- Your proposed approach and schedule to deliver the scope of work described above.
- Examples of previous relevant projects, the names of two referees who have experience of working with you on similar projects and CVs for you (and your team, if applicable).
- Breakdown of costs by scope of work.

Your proposal should be emailed to Katherine Lynch, Director of Projects k.lynch@portsunlightvillage.com by the deadline.

12. Timescales

The **deadline for proposals is 5pm on Tuesday 20th January 2026**. Ideally an appointment will be made during w/c 26th January. Interviews may be required depending on the response. The project should be completed by May 2026. You will be required to present a draft report to PSVT's Board on 13th March 2026.

13. Further Information

For an informal conversation please contact Katherine Lynch, Director of Projects k.lynch@portsunlightvillage.com

PSVT's 3-year Strategic Plan 2025-28 and 10-year Conservation Management Plan (CMP) 2018-2028 are available to download from PSVT's website www.portsunlightvillage.com