

PLANNING COMMITTEE - THURSDAY 16TH AUGUST

REPORT TITLE:	Adoption of Port Sunlight Village Conservation Management Plan (CMP)
REPORT OF:	CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC AND HOUSING GROWTH
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	COUNCILLOR GEORGE DAVIES, HOUSING AND PLANNING

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to: inform the Members of the public consultation results (5 weeks) relating on the adoption of Port Sunlight Village Conservation Management Plan (CMP). All documents relating to the CMP can be viewed attached in appendix 1.
- 1.2 Council officers are keen to pursue opportunities for improved recognition of and protection for this Conservation Area. The CMP will help you to understand why the heritage is valued and by whom. It helps you take an overall view, and it sets out a framework of policies and actions that will help to make decisions about how to look after the heritage assets whilst ensuring it continues to be used, enjoyed and made accessible.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 For Members to adopt the Port Sunlight Village CMP as a material consideration in development management decisions and to use it to manage the Port Sunlight Village Conservation Area.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Wirral Council has a total of 26 Conservation Areas; Port Sunlight Village Conservation Area was last reviewed in 2007 by an external company Byrom Clark Roberts. Following this appraisal Port Sunlight Village Trust (PSVT); a charitable trust who help to maintain, repair and manage the heritage assets within the conservation area; has taken the lead role in preparing the CMP through its workforce. Where necessary, specialist advice has been sought. The information gathering and writing of the Port Sunlight Village Conservation Management Plan has been overseen by Wirral Council. The CMP has produced a series of actions for the future management of the area over the next ten years.
- 3.2 Conservation Areas are defined by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as an 'area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. Conservation Area designation means that planning permission is required for the demolition of most structures, notice has to be given to fell trees, the extent of permitted development rights is reduced and a high standard is required for all development schemes. Local planning authorities also have a duty to periodically review the extent of the designated area and expand (or reduce) the Conservation Area boundary as is appropriate.
- 3.3 The CMP being a partnership document, it sets out a strategic framework for management actions and its purpose is to help co-ordinate the activities of all involved. The CMP sets out PSVT's ten-year plan. It celebrates the history, buildings, open spaces and community of the Port Sunlight Conservation Area, and describes their approach to managing, maintaining, conserving and enhancing the village. However, the plan builds in flexibility, and they will conduct annual reviews to assess their progress and to address the new challenges faced by this 21st-century community.
- 3.4 The CMP will support the active management of the Conservation Area through the development control process and would be used to defend the Council's position at any planning appeals.

4.0 ABOUT THE DRAFT PORT SUNLIGHT VILLAGE CMP

4.1 The Port Sunlight Village CMP covers the whole Conservation Area. At its most basic, a CMP describes: its history, evaluates its significance, assess its condition, draws up policy, identifies the risks and sets out actions for its heritage; why it matters and to whom; what is happening to it; and what are the key issues you need to be aware of to look after it. To give you an overview each section of is briefly summarised:

4.2 History:

Port Sunlight is the vision of industrialist William Lever; a model village to house workers at his soap factory Lever Brothers which went on to become the global manufacturing giant Unilever. He provided his workers with sanitary housing, access to open green space, allotments, schools, a hospital, a swimming pool, art and literature and access to 'appropriate' leisure activities and training opportunities that far exceeded what was typically available to factory workers at the time.

4.3 The village also gave Lever the chance to express his interest in architecture, landscape design and town and country planning. From 1888-1938 over 30 different architects were involved in the design of the village. A wide variety of revival style English domestic designs were used, giving the impression that the village had developed over four centuries, rather than within fifty years. Contrasting styles were often placed alongside each other to create interest, and no two cottages are identical.

4.4 Lever Brothers, which later became the global manufacturing giant Unilever, built, owned and managed the village. 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. A change in Unilever's business priorities in the late 1970s meant that in 1979 tenants were given the option to buy their properties; the first time the houses had ever been sold. From 1979-1999 nearly two-thirds of the houses in the village were sold. Unilever transferred all of its remaining village assets to a charitable trust; PSVT in April 1999. Since then, PSVT has maintained and improved the assets in its care and worked with stakeholders for the long-term sustainability of the community and heritage.

4.5 Significance:

Port Sunlight is described as one of the finest surviving examples of early urban planning in the United Kingdom. The village was founded in 1888 by businessman William Hesketh Lever who wanted to create decent and affordable housing for his Lever Brothers soap factory workers. The idea was not a new one, but where Port Sunlight differed and continues to inspire today lies in the progressive social goals and traditional romantic ideals integrated so successfully in Lever's architectural vision. In his lifetime Lever also changed industry's attitude to ordinary workers and helped to create a healthier nation by promoting washing and good hygiene practices.

4.6 Today, Port Sunlight is a thriving visitor attraction welcoming in the region of 300,000 visitors per year, a vibrant residential community made up of 2,000 residents, and an important heritage site. It is also home to two important stakeholders: Unilever operate their third largest site globally on the periphery of the village; and National Museums Liverpool are custodians of the world famous Lady Lever Art Gallery which houses Lever's collection of art.

4.7 Condition:

This chapter describes the work undertaken by the PSVT's staff, Ryder Landscape Consultants and volunteers to assess the condition of the village's historic buildings, monuments & memorials and landscape, as well as their observations. Findings have been divided into 13 character areas, designated due to their design phase, age and character (a full breakdown of these character areas can be found in Appendix 8). Observations have included notes on inappropriate alterations, enforcement issues, retention of historic characters and repair requirements. Works noted in the condition chapter have been assigned a priority- high, medium or low, with set completion dates to prevent heritage loss.

4.8 Policy:

In this chapter PSVT describes their 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. PSVT has the responsibility to preserve, maintain and promote Port Sunlight. There are several protections and policies in place to assist, helping to manage the changes required to make Port Sunlight a 21st-century village fit for residents and visitors. They establish standards and guidelines, stabilise and improve property values, and protect the character, setting and appearance of the village. In Port Sunlight village, there are three tiers of protection:

1. Statutory listing
2. Conservation area designation
3. Restrictive covenants

4.9 The CMP works within the Council's Unitary Development Plan for the area and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which sets out planning policies to guide development. The CMP will be a material consideration in the planning process. It is a necessary and valuable tool for strategic co-ordination and monitoring. The CMP will make management decisions easier, as it provides a guide to action from routine maintenance through to large-scale changes, whilst preserving and enhancing the heritage.

4.10 Risk:

This chapter describes the main risks to the heritage in Port Sunlight. The risks have been identified through survey work, consultation with stakeholders, and interviews with past and present PSVT staff. The process gives PSVT the opportunity to improve or address issues, and also informs the heritage aims, objectives and action plan. The headline risks outlined in the CMP are:

- Erosion or loss of the village's heritage character.
- An incomplete understanding of the history, significance and integrity of Port Sunlight and all associated connections.
- Difficulty in maintaining a sustainable, ecological environment, balancing advances in green technology with the protection and care of heritage assets in Port Sunlight.
- A lack of understanding regarding the statutory policies and protections for heritage.
- The inconsistent management of boundaries.
- A lack of understanding regarding the role of Port Sunlight Village Trust (PSVT).
- A shortage of local tradespeople with heritage skills.
- Port Sunlight's suitability for 21st-century living, balancing the differing needs of an ageing population with those of families and young people.
- Gaps in knowledge over the condition of the heritage.
- Different resources available to and priorities of the village's stakeholders.
- The relatively high cost of maintaining historic properties.
- Balancing the development of Port Sunlight as a visitor destination whilst preserving the unique heritage of the village.

4.11 Actions:

PSVT developed this action plan to identify opportunities for and to address risks to the significance, condition and integrity of the heritage in the Port Sunlight Conservation Area, as covered in chapters 3, 4 and 6 of the CMP and further described in the CMP appendices. The plan was informed by the results of a landscape conditions survey, the exterior conditions survey of the houses, the results of the monuments and memorials survey, a 2016 householder survey, the findings from a visitor survey completed in 2017, and issues raised by residents and stakeholders during PSVT's robust CMP consultation process.

4.12 Arranged by heritage aims and objectives, the plan includes a brief description of a proposal, identifies the party responsible for delivering the work, projects a timescale for completion and where relevant, reference to national or local policies. This section sets out the recommended actions required for the achievement of the aims.

4.13 The Action Plan uses the six aims identified in the draft CMP for managing the Port Sunlight Conservation Area. These aims have been formulated through public consultation and input of the stakeholders. The draft CMP presents detailed realistic and achievable actions based on these aims. The four heritage aims are:

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

- Manage change within and around the conservation area in a sustainable way.
- Increase understanding of Port Sunlight's significance.
- Improve access for people visiting, working and living in the Port Sunlight Conservation Area.

4.14 Where possible timescales in the Delivery Plan have been given as accurately as can be foreseen. Some actions will, by their nature, be ongoing. A number of actions have been identified as being capable of completion in a 1 to 2 year timescale. Other actions are linked to other established plans and strategies.

5.0 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

5.1 A formal public consultation exercise was conducted to solicit the views of stakeholders: PSVT staff, trustees, volunteers, all residents - tenants and private owner occupiers, private landlords, Family Housing Association, Sanctuary Housing Association, PSVT commercial tenants, PSVT 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 and their employees, Lady Lever Art Gallery, United Utilities, Mersey Travel, Network Rail, Stagecoach, Sky, conveyancing professionals, local further and higher education establishments, dog walkers, cyclists, New Ferry and Lower Bebington - residents and businesses, politicians – local councillors & MP and Port Sunlight River Park.

5.2 The list of stakeholders all received a letter, a poster was cited in the Port Sunlight's Community Hub, hyperlinks to the CMP were cited on Twitter and social media (e.g. Facebook) and the CMP documents were available to view at the Community Hub and Port Sunlight's Museum. The consultation letter that was sent out outlined the proposed CMP for the Port Sunlight Conservation Area along with links to a website explaining the document. A copy of the resident letter is attached as Appendix 2. The letter requested that any views or comments on the matter were to be submitted to the PSVT by 13th June 2018, this provided a 5 week consultation period.

6.0 CONSULTATION RESPONSES

6.1 PSVT received a total number of 19 responses from different stakeholders. The comments received have been divided up in order to address each concern. The full responses to the public consultation are attached in Appendix 3.

6.2 PSVT appreciates that the CMP is a lengthy document and at times quite technical. Through consultation feedback the CMP has been improved.

- The CMP has been revised to better reference detailed condition survey information and the actions for heritage.
- The format of the Action plan has been revised to clarify priority.

6.3 In few instances, the consultation provided new insight into challenges, risks and opportunities for the heritage in Port Sunlight. This feedback has been incorporated into the revised and final CMP. Some feedback was inappropriate for the CMP. This feedback was not incorporated into the final CMP.

7.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 National Policy: National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Planning for the Historic Environment sets out the Government's objectives for the historic environment and the reasons for its conservation. This document is integral to plan making and is an important material consideration, alongside adopted local planning policies, when assessing development that will affect a heritage asset, including Conservation Areas.

7.2 Local Policy: Wirral's UDP Policy CH01: The Protection of Heritage, CH2: Development Affecting Conservation Areas, Policy CH3 Demolition Control with Conservation Areas and Policy CH9 Port Sunlight Conservation Area. These policies are an important material

consideration with all development proposals; the local authority will pay particular attention to the protection of Wirral's heritage assets.

7.3 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Section 69, states that every Local Planning Authority shall from time to time determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and, shall designate these areas as Conservation Areas. It shall be the duty of a Local Planning Authority from time to time to review the past exercise of functions under this section and to determine whether any parts or any further parts of their area should be designated as Conservation Areas; and, if they so determine, they shall designate those parts accordingly."

7.4 Section 71 of the Act states that it shall be the duty of a Local Planning Authority "From time to time to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are Conservation Areas."

7.5 Section 72 of the Act states that "In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a Conservation Area, of any functions under or by virtue of any of the provisions mentioned in subsection, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area."

8.0 FINANCIAL AND STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The main resource implications are the insertion of electronic versions of the documents on the website. It is not anticipated that paper copies will be required; however officers are able to print copies if required. All expenditure can be accommodated within current department budgets.

9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Not updating the reviews of the Conservation Areas weakens the purpose of these heritage assets, meaning that Conservation Areas can obtain an 'at risk' status and potentially can be disbanded, having negative implications for the Council.

10.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Under the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 Section 149, public authorities must have due regard to the need to a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act, b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The legislation and Equality and Human Rights Commission Guidance have been fully complied within the development of the Port Sunlight Village CMP.

11.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

11.1 This document will be of interest to the assigned Members to the Port Sunlight Village Conservation Area.

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APPENDICES

1. *CMP*

2. *Copy of resident letter*

3. *Responses to consultation*