



Brief: A Public Realm Strategy for Port Sunlight

1. Introduction

Port Sunlight Village Trust (PSVT) wishes to commission the production of a Public Realm Strategy for Port Sunlight in partnership with Wirral Council. This is a unique opportunity to consider how the original vision, heritage values and character of the village can be explored through a 21st century lens, where environmental sustainability, diversity and inclusion, health and wellbeing, and accessibility are highly significant contributing factors for liveability and creating a sense of place in which to play and work. The Strategy will include strategic plans for the future of Port Sunlight, along with more detailed guidance to support the delivery of the new vision. We are looking for talented designers with qualifications in urban design and landscape architecture to deliver this important piece of work for a very special place, unlike anywhere else.

2. About Port Sunlight

'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.'

Extract from "Conserving the Past, Planning Our Future, Conservation Management Plan, Port Sunlight Village", Port Sunlight Village Trust, 2018, p. 15.

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

Port Sunlight is not the first example of an industrial worker village, but it is arguably one of the finest surviving examples in the UK. It was an immediate precursor to and a model for the Garden City movement, at the turn of the twentieth century and today.

Lever employed 30 different architectural firms in the creation of the village and nearly every period of British architectural history is represented in a revival style design. The village itself is set in 130 acres of parkland and gardens.

The majority of residential properties, public buildings and monuments are listed at Grade II. Two sections of the landscape are included in Historic England's register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. In 2014, the village War Memorial was re-designated as



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Grade I-listed. The village is also protected by conservation area status and restrictive covenants that appear in the title deeds of all residential properties.

Today the village is home to just over 2,000 residents, a mixture of owner-occupiers and private tenants, and under normal circumstances attracts in the region of 300,000 domestic and international visitors each year. There are a variety of community organisations and businesses operating in Port Sunlight, from the village school and church to pubs, a hotel, conferencing and events space, a garden centre, and a theatre. There are other important stakeholders in the village too, namely:

- Wirral Council provide certain statutory services including for planning, waste management and highways and transport.
- National Museums Liverpool responsible for the Lady Lever Art Gallery, which was founded by William Lever and continues to house one of the UK's finest collections of fine and decorative art, usually attracting in the region of 200,000 visitors each year.
- Port Sunlight is the centre for Unilever's Home Care and Beauty & Personal Care Research and Development, with major programmes for Hair, Laundry, Deodorants and Household Care being run from the site. Lever Brothers became Unilever in 1929 following a merger with the Margarine Union. The company's rich history is documented in extensive and nationally Designated archives held on site in the village.

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 inspiring place to live, work and visit." 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 is responsible for:

- The landscape within the Conservation Area (except individual back gardens for houses).
- 292 Grade II-listed houses, 323 garages and 22 commercial and community buildings.
- Port Sunlight Museum & Gift Shop, including the Edwardian Worker's Cottage and brand-new family interactive experience *SoapWorks*, and a dedicated centre for formal and informal learning.
- A diverse group of monuments (listed and unlisted), museum collection, and village archive.
- Tackling social issues and promoting community cohesion.
- Managing the visitor destination and raising its profile through partnership working, marketing activities, visitor services, product development, and events.

PSVT employs approximately 40 members of staff to discharge its charitable objectives and works with 50 volunteers across all areas of our operations from landscape gardening to



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building conservation. We are governed by a Board of Trustees with expertise in housing, finance, conservation, surveying, planning, museums, and heritage.

Since its foundation, PSVT has been in receipt of an annual covenant from Unilever which will conclude in March 2023. Over the last 5 years, the organisation has been successfully transitioning to financial independence. An important objective of this Strategy is to explore ways in which the Public Realm can contribute to long term revenue generation for PSVT.

In 2019, PSVT launched its first 5-year strategic plan articulating five strategic objectives for the organisation and village:

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 estate
4. Realise the potential of Port Sunlight as a leading visitor attraction
5. Be a brilliant place to work

A new 10-year Conservation Management Plan was adopted for the village at the same time.

Since then, the organisation has been working hard to lay solid foundations to realise its new vision and ambitions for the site. This includes:

- Environmental Sustainability Strategy, June 2021.
- Interpretive Masterplan, April 2021
- A Strategy for generating income from PSVT-owned Assets & Property, March 2021.
- Feasibility Study for World Heritage Site Inscription, December 2019.

It is anticipated that the Public Realm Strategy will work with the recommendations set out within those documents, to help and support in achieving their objectives. The strategy must pull together the broad ranging aspirations of those documents and provide tangible solutions which will guide future interventions within Port Sunlight.

4. Why a Public Realm Strategy?

Port Sunlight is both a 21st century community where approximately 2,000 people live and a further 2000 people work, and a heritage and cultural destination attracting over 300,000 visitors per year. In this context the public realm has a significant influence on the quality of people's lives within, and experience of visiting, Port Sunlight.

The Port Sunlight Conservation Area boundaries closely define the perceived boundaries of the village, and most buildings within the village are listed. The public realm includes all the spaces between these buildings, including the streets, monuments and landscape features,



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views and vistas, public open spaces, and in Port Sunlight's case the communal spaces at the back of the blocks, the large verges, and front gardens also. The road carriageways and pavements throughout the village are adopted by Wirral Council, a significant area of the public realm, therefore it is important that this piece of work is delivered in partnership with Wirral Council.

The public realm plays a fundamental role in our perception and understanding of places, influencing how we interpret them and the quality of our experience within them. In addition, the public realm plays a crucial role in how well places function and how successful they are in meeting the long-term needs of residents and short-term needs of people just passing through. It is through this realisation and appreciation of the significance of the public realm that PSVT and Wirral Council have identified the need for a public realm strategy.

Port Sunlight's public realm has been identified as one of its key weaknesses. Inconsistency in materials, quality, and maintenance regimes are commonly cited, which if not addressed present a threat to our long-term ambitions for the village. PSVT has committed to pursuing World Heritage Site Inscription for the site, in partnership with Wirral Council, Unilever Plc, and National Museums Liverpool, to raise its profile nationally and internationally and foster strengthened participatory site management.

5. Themes the Public Realm Strategy will address.

A. Restoration or Adaptation?

Port Sunlight is a historic village and a designated heritage asset, with almost 900 listed buildings, a conservation area, and with three entries in the register of historic parks and gardens at The Dell, The Diamond and The Causeway, all at Grade II. The landscape was always intended to be a fundamental element in the village character, and forms part of the essential design principles of the village, as a forerunner of the Garden City Movement.

The designed landscape made use of the natural forms of the original creeks, but also provided more formal areas, as well as functional green spaces. Gardens and allotments were planned from the outset alongside tree planting and boulevards. This mix of the formal, informal, and functional is an important component of place making in the village. It is envisaged that the guide will both preserve the original landscape intent, whilst adapting it to respond to changing environmental and societal demands, and that there will be elements of both restoration and enhancement. The successful bid will need to demonstrate how the original landscape will be respected, whilst also addressing contemporary requirements, e.g., more allotments and land set aside for productivity.



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B. World Heritage Status

Following a Feasibility Study undertaken by Chris Blandford Associates in 2018/19, PSVT along with key partners have committed to pursuing World Heritage Site Inscription for the village. The study identified Port Sunlight's public realm and the current visitor offer as key areas of weakness. The latter is being addressed through the implementation of an asset strategy and interpretive masterplan. It is expected that the former will be addressed through the Public Realm Strategy, and it is essential that any recommendations from the strategy support the aims and values of UNESCO, critically the high standards required for site integrity and authenticity.¹

C. The Climate Crisis

A well-designed public realm strategy has a very substantial role to play in contributing to Port Sunlight's transition to a more sustainable future. We are looking for designers who can help articulate an overarching plan to drive those issues forward, and which is broad and holistic in its approach. It will focus on the key areas identified within PSVT's Environmental Sustainability Strategy of energy, water, waste, transport, greening the village and business, and support Wirral Council's ambitious targets for the Wirral peninsula.

The Public Realm Strategy has a very substantial part to play in defining Port Sunlight's response to the climate crisis. This should be at the forefront of any proposals within the strategy.

D. Strength of community/ make it real/ wider neighbourhood links

As a village, Port Sunlight has more assets than most, it includes pubs, a community hall, a theatre, bowling greens, a school, a church, a garden centre, parks, allotments, a museum, an art gallery and access to two train stations. It has the ingredients or the components of a comprehensive and successful village, yet in parts it can appear disparate, lacking a centre and to some feel 'unreal'. There is at times a dichotomy between being a real village and being a heritage and cultural destination. The public realm strategy must explore ways in which to strengthen the qualities of Port Sunlight as a liveable, successful village, knitted in with the surrounding neighbourhoods, whilst preserving and enhancing the village's intrinsic heritage value and its distinctiveness.

E. Safer Streets

Residents of Port Sunlight cite safety and security as being one of the main motivating factors for living in the village today. The design and layout of the site underpins this. It is essential that the public realm strategy continues to support this priority for the community,

¹ See UNESCO's Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, 2019 (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/guidelines/>) for a description of these key aspects for consideration, pp 79-95.



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and deals with some of the emerging issues, including speeding traffic and anti-social behaviour, which pose a threat to the village.

F. Culture and Tourism

Port Sunlight is one of the Liverpool City Region's key tourism destinations, however there is a recognition that it could offer more and strengthen its contribution to the visitor economy. The public realm strategy should build on the interventions and improvements identified in the Interpretive Masterplan. It is anticipated that any public realm strategies will support those developments and explore how they could be further improved to enhance the visitor experience, including creating better connectivity between the 'old' and 'new' village, presenting a more cohesiveness offer, overnight stays and in explaining and revealing the myriad of stories and narratives which Port Sunlight has to offer.

G. Audience Development

One of PSVT's core ambitions, and one that is closely aligned with the sustainability of the organisation and the community, is the need to diversify both the visitor base and make-up of village residents and to make Port Sunlight an inclusive village. The public realm strategy will play a role in how we interpret Port Sunlight's contested history, in supporting the provision of new amenities as well as cultural interventions (e.g., public art) to appeal to new audiences, and in creating spaces and places for formal and informal learning.

H. Health and well-being

As expressed through Lever's original vision, health and well-being have always been at the heart of the Port Sunlight vision. The public realm strategy offers up an opportunity to revisit these ideals, to understand what those requirements include in the 21st Century context, and how the village is best placed to respond to them. As with the environmental sustainability strategy we anticipate this to be broad in its reach and scope, addressing aspects of physical and mental health and how the public realm offers subtle and easy ways to adopt healthier lifestyles. This theme is of particular importance as we emerge from the Covid-19 global pandemic and is borne out in the work PSVT has done in 2020 and 2021 to understand the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the village.

I. Connectivity and accessibility

Port Sunlight is well served by public transport, with two Merseyrail stations at either end of the village, and access to buses along the New Chester Road. Local shops and additional services are also within easy reach, however despite this, facilities can still appear to be further and distances between them greater than they are. A key part of the public realm strategy will be to understand the issues which affect these perceptions, and to understand current issues affecting pedestrian and cycle movement across the village. Many areas the



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village is not easily accessible for disabled users, prohibiting peoples' enjoyment of the village as a resident or visitor.

Design teams will be expected to develop a comprehensive movement and access strategy for the village which will include an active travel plan promoting walking and cycling and the use of public transport over individual car use. It will explore the potential of a '20-minute neighbourhood' approach to Port Sunlight, and how it connects with the surrounding neighbourhoods of New Ferry and Lower Bebington and the wider strategic road networks. It will identify strategies for improvements to road crossings and slowing vehicle speeds through the village, to enable all residents and visitors to feel safe moving through. Provision for non-local visitors will need to be considered in the form of designated parking and parking controls. The future management of special events and trading on the Highway are also relevant, along with the interface with Unilever's site.

J. 'Greening' the village

The village is very green, up to 27 % Tree Cover and 26% Grass or other planting. The manicured and beautiful public spaces within the village are one of its most defining features. The planting across the village is very well maintained, and provides visual interest throughout the seasons, it contributes to the pleasure of walking around Port Sunlight and its atmosphere. There are also significant areas of lawn, either public open spaces or front gardens which create the 'open' characteristic of the village. At the back of blocks additional areas of open space can be found, once allotments, now a combination of lawn, garages, private gardens, and a small number of remaining allotments.

Along with its built heritage and monuments, these spaces are Port Sunlight's assets. As much as the aesthetic qualities are an important consideration, PSVT are keen to explore how much more these spaces can offer to the themes already set out above. We are looking for design teams to explore how these spaces will contribute to Port Sunlight's climate change resilience, how will they contribute to the cultural offer, improve community cohesion, health and well-being, and connectivity? We anticipate strategies may also include sustainable urban drainage, productive landscapes, including food production, events, and activities.

The 'State of Nature Report' 2019 showed that 41% of UK native species have decreased in abundance since 1970, there is an opportunity for the abundance of 'green' spaces across the village to contribute to improving that statistic. Design teams will be expected to deliver strategies which will set out ways to address this issue, to contribute to a net increase in biodiversity across Port Sunlight.



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K. Materials, lighting, and signage

Over the years, through repairs and maintenance challenges, the quality of village street furniture, hard surfaces, lighting, and signage has suffered. In parts it has become a patchwork of materials and types lacking a cohesive approach. Although signage throughout the village is generally considered good, providing visitors with an overview of what the village offers and where things are, there is an opportunity to revisit this, alongside the interpretative masterplan, to improve the visitor experience.

The public realm strategy will develop an approach to hard and soft landscaping, including street furniture and the enhancement of monuments and memorials, and consider the long-term issue of maintenance and repairs. A signage and lighting strategy will be developed to not only improve safety and legibility, but to enhance the unique features of Port Sunlight. In all cases, an integrated approach is required that supports Wirral Council's legal obligations, is consistent in the pallet of materials and equipment used, sustainable, and fit for purpose.

6. Consultation and engagement

Port Sunlight relies on a model of participatory site management, therefore consulting and engaging with our diverse stakeholders will be key. From residents to village businesses, groups and societies to national museums and Unilever, the strategy will need to meet real need. The design team will be expected to design and deliver a complementary programme of consultation and engagement. The results of previous consultation will be made available including a report by Counterculture documenting the impact of Covid-19 on Port Sunlight (Autumn 2020).

As a minimum we would expect the following stakeholders to be engaged with:

- PSVT commercial and community tenants
- Port Sunlight residents – owner-occupiers, tenants (PSVT and private), and landlords
- Private 'businesses'
- Groups and societies
- Partners: Unilever Port Sunlight, National Museums Liverpool, Wirral Council
- Other stakeholders – Merseytravel, Network Rail, Stagecoach, Scottish Power, and Merseyside Police
- Conservation Areas Wirral, and Historic England
- Alison McGovern, MP for Wirral South, and Local Councillors, in particular Jo Bird and Jerry Williams, and the local Ward committee
- Wirral Active Travel Forum
- The Environment and Climate Emergency Committee, and Cool Wirral Partnership

7. Scope of works



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1. Identify best method (policy, agreement, amendment to the CMP) for enabling delivery of the strategy with Wirral Council and major stakeholders.
2. Review PSVT's Environmental Sustainability Strategy, Asset Strategy, and Interpretive Masterplan, Conservation Management Plan, and take account of the findings from recent survey work documenting the impact of Covid-19 on village residents, businesses, and societies. These strategic documents will inform and support the public realm strategy. Work with PSVT to clearly define key priorities for the new strategy.
3. Undertake archival research and site analysis to identify historic, character-defining public realm schemes (extant and lost) from 1900-1965. Present findings, highlighting overall aesthetic and theme and key features or design elements for each phase of development. Share this landscape evolution as a visual exercise (historic photographs, drawings and mapping supported by explanatory text) with PSVT, key stakeholders and the local community to raise awareness about the history and significance of the site. Assume digital (can be hosted on PSVT's websites) and paper/in person consultation (pending lifting of Covid-19 restrictions).
4. Map original features that remain in the public realm to be protected, restored, and incorporated into the new/future/ public realm.
5. Build on existing work (completed by others) to identify weaknesses and challenges in the Public Realm for the village as a whole and on a character area basis.
6. Explore options which address the identified issues and options, based on a collective vision.
7. Describe how each design proposal is supported by sound archival evidence, enhances the character of the conservation area and addresses erosion of the public realm while supporting 21st century standards (including sustainability and accessibility).
8. Undertake consultation with PSVT, key stakeholders (including statutory and regulatory agencies) and the local community to get feedback on the design proposals.
9. Reflect and respond to consultation responses to identify a unifying (conservation area) or character-area specific design strategy for the public realm and illustrate this with sketches, design guidelines, standards and a phased or prioritised delivery plan. Include indicative costs and funding opportunities to deliver the scope of work.
10. Implementation strategy – explore a broad phasing and delivery plan and long-term management options. These should include potential funding streams, and revenue generation opportunities.



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Stages of work

1. Baseline analysis – Urban design and landscape mapping, review of other strategic documents, review case studies and what works elsewhere.
2. Identify the issues and opportunities, unique features and characteristics, shared common goals with the other strategic documents.
3. Form a vision.
4. Develop the strategies and explore options for interventions.
5. Draft Public Realm Strategy.
6. Consult with stakeholders and community.
7. Define implementation Strategy (including a delivery plan and indicative costs).
8. Refine Public Realm Strategy.
9. Final Public Realm Strategy.

11. Skills & experience

We believe that to deliver this piece of work successfully you will require a project team with the following mix of skills and experience:

- Research experience and specialist knowledge in heritage streetscapes/public realm, late Victorian-Edwardian heritage character, planned industrial communities. The team will be expected to work closely with Wirral Council heritage officers, and PSVT heritage staff.
- Experience with designing 'reconstruction' features adapted for 21st century standards.
- Experience with new design for heritage settings (aim high and act like a World Heritage Site!).
- Experience with designing for climate change and environmental sustainability in mind, particularly green infrastructure.
- Experience projecting indicative costs for major works.
- Urban Designer.
- Landscape architecture.
- Highways engineer input as part of the team to advise on parking, travel patterns and technical support. Wirral Council Highways Team will also support the development of the strategy.
- Experience working with local authorities, highways, and other bodies to develop and deliver a long-term plan that would be appropriate for delivery.
- Highly Desirable: Local knowledge and local (for environmental and economic reasons); environmental credentials; strong commitment to Diversity and Inclusion.



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12. Budget

The total maximum budget is £25,000 + VAT, inclusive of all costs of delivery, such as materials, printing, events, and travel/accommodation. We will still consider your application if you need to better define your scope to meet this budget.

13. Reporting relationships

You will report to Katherine Lynch, Director of Heritage at Port Sunlight Village Trust. Officers from Wirral Council will support the development of the strategy and attend key milestone meetings.

14. 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 (30%)
- An initial response to the brief, the key issues, and the main opportunities for the future of Port Sunlight which the Public Realm Strategy should address (30%)
- Examples of previous relevant projects, the names of two referees who have experience of working with you on similar projects and CVs for your team (20%)
- Breakdown of costs by scope of work (20%)

Proposals will be evaluated on a quality (80%) and cost (20%) basis. The evaluation weighting is provided in brackets above.

15. Timescales

The design team will be required to present the final Public Realm Strategy to the PSVT Board on 7th December 2021. Therefore, the final Strategy document will be required by PSVT by Friday 12th November.

Procurement activity	Date
Brief issued	14 th July 2021



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Deadline for clarification questions	28 th July 2021
Bid submission deadline	10.00am, Wednesday 4th August 2021
Interviews	WC 9 th August 2021
Contract awarded	WC 16 th August 2021

Please submit proposals by email with subject heading: **Public Realm Strategy for Port Sunlight**, for the attention of Katherine Lynch, Director of Heritage, k.lynch@portsunlightvillage.com.

16. Further information

Contact Katherine Lynch, Director of Heritage, by calling 0151 644 4800 or emailing k.lynch@portsunlightvillage.com.

PSVT's 5-year strategic plan and 10-year Conservation Management Plan are available to download from PSVT's websites www.portsunlightvillage.com and www.portsunlightresidents.com