

Brick walls and chimneys information sheet

All exterior walls and chimneys at Port Sunlight's listed homes are protected features. This includes walls and chimneys at the front, sides and rear of the property and outhouse walls. Wall and chimney finishes, details and materials contribute to the heritage value of the listed homes and the character of the conservation area.

The wide variety of revival style domestic designs used for Port Sunlight's houses, and the traditional building materials found throughout, differentiate Port Sunlight from other planned communities. We are unique because of the very individual designs and materials found at your home.

Demolition or large scale repair or rebuilding of the exterior walls and chimneys will require Listed Building Consent from Wirral Council and permission from PSVT.

Port Sunlight brickwork and construction

Most of the bricks in Port Sunlight were machine-made with clay and sand and fired in a kiln. Although many were from Ruabon in Wales, archival evidence indicates that bricks for houses on or near the Diamond were imported from continental Europe.

Brickwork in Port Sunlight was constructed with lime-based mortars and the brick units themselves. Unlike modern sand and cement mortars, lime-based mortars (even hybrid lime mortars) are softer and more breathable than the adjacent brick units. This is intentional to allow moisture to move through the mortar rather than the bricks and to enable slight movement in the walls themselves. The use of sand and cement mortars in traditional Port Sunlight brickwork can cause irreversible damage to your walls and lead to damp.

Port Sunlight has both solid wall construction and early cavity wall construction, with a narrow gap between the outer and inner leaves. It is important to know if your house has solid wall or cavity wall construction before undertaking work.

What to look for?

- Check for cracking or areas of brickwork that are bulging. This could be evidence of structural movement.
- Look for open joints or cracked or deeply recessed mortar in joints between bricks.
- Look for loss or detachment of the surface of the bricks themselves.
- Look for moss, dark staining and powdery white coatings at the brickwork.

- Is your brickwork painted?
- Look for blocked gutters, downpipes or hopper heads which could be leaking and soaking the brick walls.
- Does your pointing mortar appear to be harder and more durable than your bricks? If so, you might have sand and cement mortar instead of a lime-based mortar. Over time, hard sand and cement mortars will irreversibly damage your brickwork and it will have to be replaced.

A word of caution about painted brickwork:

- Brick walls in Port Sunlight should not be painted.
- Paint coatings can damage traditional brick walls by trapping moisture between the paint surface and the masonry.
- If left in place, paint can lead to damp inside your home and irreversibly damage your brickwork.
- Removing paint from brickwork is difficult.
- No air abrasive or other abrasive methods should be used.
- Consult with PSVT's Asset Manager (Conservation) for appropriate methods for removal.
- Do not apply waterproof coatings, paint or other finishes to brickwork.

Maintenance or repairs

The maintenance or repair of brickwork can be quite challenging. Aside pruning climbing plants and ensuring that your rainwater goods are properly protecting your walls, most repairs should be done by a mason who has experience with traditional brickwork and lime-based mortar and has worked on listed houses.

For more information about repointing brickwork, see Historic England's helpful publication. <https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/repointing-brick-and-stone-walls/heag144-repointing-brick-and-stone-walls.pdf/>

Lead paint advisory

Paints found in older buildings may contain lead. Lead can be harmful to health, particularly for children. Sometimes lead paint has been covered by later, modern paints. If you are unsure if the paint used in your house (including windows, doors, walls, trim and other surfaces) contains lead, it should be assumed to be present and precautions should be taken when stripping, sanding or otherwise preparing painted surfaces.

For information about boundary walls, please see:
Boundary wall information sheet.

For information about stone walls, please see:
Stone walls and chimneys information sheet.