

- help safeguard the things that make Oxton Village a special place to live and work in as a historic Conservation Area,
- support appropriate development and improvements to the Village and its buildings, and
- foster a better understanding of the area and its history.

One of the best ways to protect and promote the area is to ensure there is a strong local community, and we organise high profile events which bring residents, visitors and businesses together to celebrate this special place, raising funds to support our wider activities. That's why our strapline is 'Conservation and Community'.

Our full constitution can be found [here](#).

We are an open membership organisation, with day-to-day activities run by a committee which is elected at our annual general meeting. Accountability is important, and we publish regular newsletters and e-bulletins about our activities, as well as undertaking member surveys from time to time.

In addition to responding to changes in the Village – such as applications for new development, building alterations and tree maintenance – it is important for us to have longer term plans which shape our activities, prioritise our resources and help us fulfil our mission.

This short document brings these plans together as a strategy, setting out what we can achieve practically over the next five years. As well as documenting the 'day job', it sets out three medium term goals aimed at driving change, each accompanied by a shorter-term action plan which will be reviewed regularly. It is against this strategy that our success will be measured.

2. Our current priorities

The Society's strapline priorities of 'Conservation and Community' can be difficult to balance. This is partly due to the amount of effort that is required to organise our two flagship community events – the Secret Gardens and Christmas Lights - though in the last five years, the committee has been successful in recruiting energetic non-committee volunteers to manage and run them. This has allowed the committee to re-focus on our core conservation activities, supported by the work of a very active History Group, which leads and promotes the understanding of the people and institutions of Oxton and how they have shaped the area over the years.

In the last five years some of the larger properties in the area have been sold and are currently empty and 'at risk', awaiting repurposing or redevelopment (e.g. Ashton House). In these situations, the Society's architectural expertise has been called on to ensure that historically important characteristics of these properties are retained. Our influencing can take the form of letters to or meetings with officers at the planning department at Wirral Borough Council and constantly pushing our agenda via our local Councillors.

We have also had to respond to contemporary challenges facing local residents, for example providing advice to those who wish to install solar panels on their roofs. In this we have had to balance the practical needs of residents seeking to maximise energy efficiency, with maintaining the architectural integrity of the Village. The overall approach has proved successful, with many panels being installed with minimal visual impact. We continue to make sure that all residents within the

Oxton Conservation Area (not just members of the Society) are aware and informed of the latest regulations and policies regarding changes to the exterior of their properties. Success has been evidenced by the very few instances where enforcement action has had to be undertaken by the Council, with the vast majority of residents showing great responsibility and demonstrating their appreciation for the heritage value of their homes.

However, it is important to acknowledge that the Society would struggle to thrive without the income derived from the Secret Gardens, which funds most of our day-to-day activities, and much committee member time is taken up in assisting the volunteer teams who run this important event. But the overwhelming impact of the event is the sense of community it creates, and the tens of thousands of pounds generated for local charities working with young people and those facing disadvantage. This is something which we are very proud of.

3. Our five-year strategy in summary

Over the summer and autumn of 2025, we spent some time considering the additional things we want to achieve over the next five years or so, on top of the everyday activities which have become part of the regular rhythm of our work.

Eight possible areas of work emerged, but we realised that we needed to prioritise them to match the resources at our disposal – both human in terms of volunteer time, and financial.

In autumn 2025 we undertook a survey of our members, with about a third responding. The full results can be found [here](#). Following a discussion at the AGM, the committee decided to prioritise the three most important themes identified by members to guide our work over the coming years as the basis of our strategy. These are as follows:

Work with the local authority to better understand and then address parking and traffic management in the Village centre, to reduce the visual impact of vehicles and promote safety.

Protect and enhance the quality of the built environment and public realm in the Village, by supporting residents' ability to access high quality advice relating to common maintenance and improvement issues, and by campaigning to strengthen the powers of the local authority to prevent harm through inappropriate alterations and development.

Directly invest to improve the street scene and public spaces in the Conservation Area, through a series of well-chosen small-scale projects.

The rest of this document sets out these three themes in more detail, setting out what we want to achieve and why, and the first steps required to get there.

Theme 1: Parking and Traffic Management

We will attempt to improve the visual amenity and accessibility of the Village area for visitors and residents by:

- *Examining parking and traffic passage pinch points that present a negative visual impact on the Village and compromise safety.*

- *Working with the traffic department at Wirral Borough Council, to help them understand the value of local knowledge in setting out traffic policy.*
- *Identifying small scale improvements that can be made with limited investment to deter or eliminate bad motoring practices and promote the safety of pedestrians.*
- *Working with residents and businesses to seek out a better overall approach to parking and traffic management that allows the two to thrive together, recognising the need to keep the village area vibrant and viable.*

By 2031 we want to achieve the following results:

- A pedestrian-friendly village centre area without illegal parking.**
- A parking system that encourages people to visit and use the businesses facilities, without inconveniencing residents.**
- Measures in place to actively deter driving in the area > 20mph**
- A traffic flow system that suits pedestrians, businesses, residents and visitors**

Justification

The village centre of Oxton has changed over the last twenty years from a shopping area with a few restaurants to a predominantly café/bar /restaurant area that operates for almost eighteen hours a day. This is an inevitable reflection of modern life, and it is positive to see people visiting the Village throughout the daytime and evening, providing vital custom to the businesses occupying premises that otherwise might be empty.

But with this change in the use of the village centre has come a negative impact on the visual amenity and pedestrian safety. At busy times, the Village appears like a traffic jungle, probably deterring visitors (the very customers that the businesses need), and presenting visibility difficulties at certain locations for motorists and pedestrians, that could lead to a major accident. Change is necessary to promote Oxton as a calm and inviting place to visit.

See appendix for year 1 action plan.

Theme 2: Protecting and enhancing the quality of the built environment

We will ensure the quality of the built environment and public realm in the Village are protected and enhanced by:

- *Promoting a better understanding of the key qualities and characteristics of the conservation area.*
- *Identifying/monitoring any buildings or other heritage assets 'at risk' of deterioration or unauthorised demolition or alteration.*
- *Providing and/or signposting residents and businesses to in depth practical advice and support on common development, maintenance and improvement issues (including support relating to walls and trees).*

- *Campaigning to strengthen the powers of the local authority to prevent the demolition/development or alteration of buildings or other heritage assets which would be harmful to the conservation area and also promoting best design and building practices.*

By 2031 we want to achieve the following results:

The Oxtou Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plans are updated as the foundation for planning decisions and action in the Conservation Area.

Appropriate buildings are successfully identified for adding to the Local Authority's 'Local Heritage List'.

The case for applying an Article 4 Direction (curbing permitted development rights) to the whole or part of the conservation area is examined and determined by the Council.

Up to date and easily accessed practical advice is readily available to residents through a range of channels.

'At risk' heritage assets in the conservation area are identified and actively monitored, enabling the targeting of support for residents and Council enforcement action.

The Oxtou Society is regarded as the 'go to' organisation in providing/signposting support/advice to residents undertaking development, maintenance and improvement.

Justification

The Conservation Appraisal and Management Plan set out detailed policies to guide planning decisions and other council activities in the Village. Originally written and adopted by the Council in 2010 (with the support of The Oxtou Society) these crucial documents are now out of date and need to be reviewed to reflect changes and help identify new risks and challenges facing the Village. As part of this, the case for tougher planning powers (Article 4) needs to be resolved once and for all to ensure permission is sought for minor alterations to the most important Village buildings, with extra protection also given through the Council's 'Local Listing' initiative.

At the same time, The Oxtou Society needs to project a positive image by positioning itself as the 'go to' organisation for residents looking for support, advice or signposting in relation to the legitimate works they want to do to improve their homes (including walls and garden trees). We need use all the channels at our disposal, including digital.

See appendix for year 1 action plan.

Theme 3: Small-scale improvements to street scene and public spaces

We will seek to improve the street scene and public spaces in the Village area by:

- *Identifying potential projects for improvements.*
- *Investigating their feasibility, in the context of our financial and other resources and those of relevant partners.*
- *Selecting projects to be taken forward.*
- *Undertaking projects and providing ongoing support where required.*

By 2031 we want to achieve the following results:

A significant number of small-scale street scene and public space improvements will have been carried out in the village area.
The Oxton Society is recognised for enhancing the village area, through undertaking appropriate projects.

Justification

A key part of the attractiveness of the Village lies in its outward appearance and some of this relates to its public realm. Whilst conservation considerations are important, an attractive environment also enhances the quality of community life.

The Oxton Society has always engaged in activities to improve the appearance of the Village. Examples include hanging baskets, street sign and lamppost repairs, painting and green space projects. However, these activities have tended to be ad-hoc and opportunistic.

Moving forward we are looking to undertake this in a more systematic manner, in order to include possibilities that we would otherwise be unaware and to obtain the maximum benefit from our limited resources.

See appendix for year 1 action plan.

4. Delivering the strategy

The committee of the Oxton Society cannot deliver this strategy alone, and neither should it. Its remit is to work with the residents and businesses of Oxton to achieve its aims. As such, an attempt has been made to recruit non-committee members to form the main resource to make this strategy happen.

The three themes listed above will be managed as separate strategic projects overseen by member sub-groups, in much the same way that sub-groups currently exist that report into the Society's committee (e.g. the History Group, or the Christmas Lights organising team).

The committee will monitor the progress of each project and approve its delivery programme. It will also approve any financial requirements of these projects. An overview will be taken by the committee, using its expertise which will be called on as required.

The committee meets every two months, and a review of the projects will be a standing agenda item at these meetings. Each strategic project will also have an annual authorised financial plan.

Overall progress will be reported to all members at the Annual General Meeting each November, and through the Society's regular newsletter.

APPENDIX 1: YEAR 1 ACTION PLANS

Theme 1: Parking and Traffic Management, Year 1 (2026/7)

	Specific Action	Outcome	Lead	Completion
1	Identify, speak to and appoint volunteers	Group established	JH	May 2026
2	Group consults with businesses and residents for favoured and deliverable ideas	List of proposals	Parking and traffic group	July 2026
3	Consultation with affected parties on proposals	Deliverable proposals	Parking and traffic group	November 2026
4	Meet with WBC and agree delivery options and programme of changes	Implementation plan agreed	Parking and traffic group	January 2027

Theme 2: Protecting and enhancing the quality of the built environment, Year 1 (2026/7)

	Specific Action	Outcome	Lead	Completion
1	Scope and cost a 'light touch' review of the Oxtan Conservation Area appraisal, following discussions with the local authority and Donald Insell Associates.	Decision made to commission a light touch review of the appraisal. Funding in place.	Conservation Group/LA	May 2026
2	Jointly commission review of the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (with the local authority)	Revised appraisal document and management plan completed	Conservation Group/LA	December 2026
3	Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan approved by relevant local authority committee, including consideration of case for Article 4 Direction.	Revised Management Plan approved by the Local Authority	LA	March 2027
4	Oxtan Conservation Area 'risk register' developed, identifying any heritage assets at imminent risk of deterioration or posing a public safety threat.	'Risk register' approved by Committee, shared with LA and reviewed at each committee meeting.	Conservation Group	Proto-type developed September 2026
5	Identify and promote appropriate buildings and other heritage assets for inclusion on the Local Authority's 'Local Heritage List'	Appropriate buildings/assets included on the Local List	Conservation Group	March 2026 (subject to Council approval)
6	Review the current advisory notes on the website – both in terms of accuracy of content and ease of access/visibility. Identify where editing is required, and where additional material (eg film) could be used, or relevant supporting activities undertaken (eg masterclasses).	Programme of activities agreed to improve advice/support given by the Society, with 'quick wins' implemented immediately.	Conservation Group	Sept 2026
7	Scope self-assessment exercise of condition of sandstone walls in conservation area, identifying any expert input required, method of recording and volunteer resources required. (tree survey to follow in 2027)	Self-assessment exercise 'designed' and ready for implementation.	Conservation Group	June 2026
8	Undertake baseline e survey, seeking member views on 'effectiveness' of The Oxtan Society.	Survey completed and results reported to 2026 AGM	Membership Secretary.	End of October 2026.

Theme 3: Small-scale improvements to street scene and public spaces, Year 1 (2026/7)

	Specific Action	Outcome	Lead	Completion
1	Survey of possible environmental projects	Listing of recommended projects	Public spaces group	Early 2026
2	Selection of projects to be undertaken	Projects for each year of strategy	Main committee	Mid 2026
3	Undertake year 1 projects	Completed year 1 projects	Public spaces group	Late 2026