



Saltaire

Village Society

SVS Vision Statement 2009

Saltaire Village Society (SVS) is the local democratically elected body of tenants, residents and supporters of the World Heritage Site (WHS) and buffer zone. The committee puts forward this statement to set out the values and principles which inform all their decisions and actions in the maintenance and future development of Saltaire and the buffer zone.

Saltaire is a unique asset within Bradford Metropolitan District. The mill village built through the vision of Titus Salt in the mid-19th century was saved from dereliction by two significant steps towards regeneration in the 1980s: the re-opening of Saltaire railway station and the purchase of Salt's Mill by Jonathan Silver.

Saltaire is unusual among World Heritage sites in that it remains a living community, closely woven into the neighbourhoods of more modern housing and businesses which have grown up around it. In speaking and acting for the good of Saltaire, we are concerned not just for those who live in the village, but also for neighbours and visitors who appreciate the unique features of the WHS.

The visual buffer zone extends up to Baildon Moor and round to Northcliffe Woods. Links by rail, river and canal as well as by road make it possible for local residents and visitors to enjoy several beautiful parts of our District in a single day. The greatest obstacle to this enjoyment is road traffic; reducing it is essential to protect the WHS. Saltaire is a semi-rural haven in an urban environment.

SVS was set up in 1984, led by Clive Woods in resisting proposals for a road which would have caused enormous damage to the village and Roberts Park. Clive's vision for preserving and promoting Saltaire was a driving force in the campaign leading to World Heritage status in 2001. Today SVS works to maintain the fabric of the village, promote awareness of its architectural, social and industrial history, and improve quality of life for local residents. World Heritage status does not bring any funding, so money is an issue for every conservation or improvement project.

SVS committee members work with BMDC officers (especially our WHS Officer), elected representatives, English Heritage and other individuals or agencies whose actions affect Saltaire. We offer this vision statement in advance of public consultation when the "preferred option" is announced for the new BMDC Local Development Framework.

2009 sees the start of some substantial investment in and around Saltaire. It is good to see refurbishment underway in Roberts Park, work by British Waterways on the canal and by Punch Taverns on the Boathouse pub. During the year we hope also to see progress towards

- a 20 mph zone in and around the village
- a Learning Action Plan (linked to the United Reformed Church bid to English Heritage)
- a Heritage Lottery bid for improvements on Victoria Road
- a Tourist Information Centre (following the Shipley College LSC bid)

These projects, coupled with the natural beauty of Shipley Glen, its historic tramway and plans to re-introduce salmon to the river Aire offer massive potential for tourism and regeneration. Our district needs a healthier local economy and Saltaire has a part to play in any realistic BMDC regeneration strategy. It must be noted, however, that World Heritage status is not linked automatically to an increase in tourism or local regeneration. Research findings by Price Waterhouse Cooper show that a WHS needs long-term investment; it is not a cash cow.

1. **The built environment**

Saltaire's inscription as a World Heritage Site was largely on the basis of its careful layout and construction. The quality of materials used and their architectural style is notable, but the real wonder of Saltaire is its survival into the 21st century with its original plan intact. New roads, housing and business premises now surround the village and its integrity needs to be safeguarded. There are many challenges, e.g.

- lack of an Information Centre/Museum
- ability of residents to maintain listed properties
- increasing numbers of buy-to-let houses
- some retail premises not well maintained
- damaged stonework on chimneys, retaining walls and carvings
- parked cars impeding views, causing congestion and damaging pavements

It is a great problem for residents that grants for repairing and restoring properties have ceased. Much more work is needed to preserve the fabric of the village and to encourage appreciation of its unique qualities. We are glad that our WHS officer is preparing a detailed survey of all buildings.

Substantial building alterations in the WHS are very rare, and the proposal to adapt the Shipley College Mill Building to accommodate a Tourist Information Centre will be subject to strict planning scrutiny. We look forward to the new facilities and assume that the design will conform to principles of preserving the visual integrity of the site.

Pavements and street furniture Walking is the best way to see the village, and residents do a great deal of shopping and visiting on foot. Saltaire has some dangerously uneven pavements and areas where stolen or damaged paving stones have been replaced with concrete or tarmac. We are keen to support improvements to pavements, parking and street furniture – more unified signage, lighting, seats and bins would show that the WHS is valued.

Buffer zone buildings The large visual buffer zone should be respected. Buildings on Baildon Moor are highly visible from Saltaire. Given that the village has lost so much of its original setting, any building projects affecting the visual buffer zone should be discouraged (e.g. "Heritage View" housing). Building alterations in neighbouring streets require equally close attention. There was insufficient public consultation about rebuilding Salts Grammar School and the result is very controversial. Some structures and signage in the approach to the WHS are not of high quality. We hope for improvements over time, such as the recent renovation of Aireview referral unit on Baker Street.

We believe that successful regeneration needs to respect the existing population and consider very carefully the impact of new buildings and infrastructure. Many government and local authority policies endorse this view, e.g. section S/BH14 of the Replacement Unitary Development Plan (2005): *Within the site or buffer zone development that might result in the loss of heritage fabric or reduce the enjoyment of the village to residents and visitors by damaging views into and out of the village will be refused. If necessary developments will be re sited to ensure the character of the area is protected.*

2. Transport and traffic management

When the village was built, the majority of residents would have walked far more than we do today. These streets were laid for pedestrians, cyclists, horse-drawn buses, carts and trams. Saltaire had other excellent business transport arrangements – by rail, river and canal. These could be better used today, along with other creative solutions to traffic problems. We support the Unitary Development Plan principle that *projected growth in road traffic will be restricted and its impact on the people of the District and the environment will be minimised.*

Road issues Saltaire is fringed by two very busy roads. Congestion has measurably increased since the Bingley bypass opened in 2003. We are concerned that Aire Valley regeneration plans demand greater capacity for cars and lorries without examining the consequences. Impacts upon Saltaire include pollution and danger from drivers seeking shortcuts. Any new road touching the village would face strong local disapproval - visual, aural, pollutant and physical damage to the WHS could not be avoided. The buffer zone would also be affected - river, protected canal-side and valuable ancient woodland. We believe the causes and consequences of congestion can be mitigated by:

- Sensible management of existing local road network to improve traffic flow without encouraging more vehicles.
- Implementation of the proposed 20 mph zone
- Finding ways to limit rat-running
- Research into management of parking by residents, rail commuters and visitors
- Greater investment in and emphasis on the benefits of public transport

Rail transport Saltaire station is heavily used by people travelling to work on the Airedale line. Many visitors to the WHS also arrive by rail. Investment is vital to expand capacity on the station and on trains. The station has minimal facilities and a dangerously wide gap for passengers to step across between platform and train. Regular maintenance of the embankment is also needed. It is one of our few green spaces and when unkempt or littered conveys a negative impression of the WHS.

Bus routes Residents and visitors need encouragement to travel by bus. Fares are high and frequent daytime services become very limited at night. Saltaire streets are not well suited to buses, and driver training will be important as traffic calming measures are brought in. Bus services on Bingley Road/Gordon Terrace are very important, but shops also need parking spaces for customers in cars.

Cycling Installation of bicycle racks in the village is long-awaited good news. Aire Valley roads and the canal towpath are increasingly used by people cycling to work and for recreation. We want to encourage safe cycling, which requires cyclists, pedestrians and drivers to respect each other. Use of mountain bikes in Hirst Wood and other areas of the buffer zone is very popular, but better understanding between bikers and walkers is needed.

3. Green environment and recreation

Green areas within the village and its surroundings are essential to its success as a place to live, work and visit. Saltaire's housing density is very high, 800 dwellings within 26 acres. When first built, the village was surrounded by fields. Now most of those fields have been covered with houses. Green areas which have survived are a reminder of the rural context in which the village was founded, offer many recreation facilities and promote biodiversity.

WHS Buffer Zone Much of the green space visible from Saltaire is in the buffer zone. It is enormously varied, including ancient and mature woodlands, river and canal banks, moorland, marsh/bog, and pastoral agricultural land. These open spaces provide a landscape of exceptional value, but can be all too easily eroded by new building or degraded by lack of proper maintenance. Intensive use of Shipley Glen and Hirst Wood brings specific environmental problems

The WHS cannot thrive without protective care of green spaces in its buffer zone. Planning policy implementation around Saltaire should give the highest level of protection to this landscape and the natural habitats it contains (see the 2005 national Planning Policy Statement 1 para.17). This view is supported by English Heritage and by BMDC's Environmental Capacity Study 2006 and Conservation Area reviews.

Roberts Park Refurbishment of the Half Moon café (led by Saltaire Cricket Club and Friends of Roberts Park) was a landmark on the way to full restoration of the park. During this process it is essential for BMDC officers, contractors and residents to work closely together. The park has suffered from vandalism from a small minority of people in recent years. The restoration is an opportunity to develop new relationships

and strategies to stop this. Advice from local youth workers and schools is needed to engage young people in caring for the park rather than damaging it.

When the restoration is complete SVS will continue to work closely with other groups to support activities in the park and the adjoining sports grounds. Increasing use of the park during Saltaire Festival and the success of Saltaire Bandstand concerts shows how much public enjoyment can be generated here.

Communal green spaces As most houses in Saltaire have no garden, every small green area is significant, e.g. around Victoria Hall, the churches and the almshouses in Alexandra Square. Discussions during 2008 about improvements to Victoria Road revealed that the type and number of trees is a very important issue. SVS has taken a lead in calling for neglected areas such as 'Silver Square' on Caroline Street to become greener spaces.

Outdoor recreation Bowls, tennis, rugby and football are played at Salts Sports Club, between the river and the canal. The water itself is well used by canal boats, anglers and the Rowing Club. We would welcome a return of the water bus and the pleasure boats once managed from the Boathouse. Towpath and riverside walks are well trodden, as are footpaths and bridleways through nearby woods and agricultural land. Many of the walks offer exceptional peace and quiet, valued by residents and visitors. Several are accessible for wheelchairs and push chairs. Maintenance of footpaths is important, especially those in woodland areas which are badly eroded in places.

Allotments The waiting list for BMDC and private allotments is an encouraging sign for the village community. We are in close touch with the allotments groups, supporting their role in social events and consultations. Space for residents to grow food was part of the original plan for the village, but has diminished over the years. Reviving the allotment tradition could lead to a campaign for more space.

Biodiversity, Health and Education Local schools, Shipley College and Bracken Hall Countryside Centre use green spaces around Saltaire as a resource for environmental education. This should also be an element in the new Learning Action Plan. Saltaire is an ideal setting for Walking for Health and other healthy living initiatives promoted by the NHS and BMDC. As people discover connections between biodiversity and their own health, their interest in conservation grows. Supporting healthy ecosystems around Saltaire, e.g. through tree-planting, will contribute to tourism as well as to local quality of life.

4. Sustainability and conservation

Saltaire has lots of advantages under this heading, and two major challenges. The advantages are those of a relatively stable and fairly dense community, popular because of its location on the edge of high-quality rural scenery but with quick access by public transport to major urban centres. Nearly all important facilities of daily life are within walking distance. To retain these advantages requires creative thinking and partnership working between individuals and groups with differing opinions.

Key challenges are:

- o constant and heavy through traffic with its air and noise-pollution, rat-running and deleterious effect on quality of residential life.
- o ageing properties with no cavity walls which are not easy to insulate.

Conservation There is currently a conflict between heritage conservation and energy conservation. Saltaire's buildings contribute to global warming and occupiers face very high heating bills. SVS set up the sub-group "Sustainable Saltaire" to try to tackle this contradiction, find ways to reduce energy consumption and explore local energy generation, e.g. from the river. Efforts are underway to find double-glazing and solar panels compatible with heritage requirements. Titus Salt found ways to recycle energy generated by the mill – can we match his ingenuity in the 21st century?

Waste Collection and Recycling Several years ago SVS persuaded the Council to issue reusable bags and boxes for recycling instead of large wheelie bins. But the standard refuse bins are still an eyesore and cause congestion in yards and alleys. Half size bins should be promoted for residents who would prefer them. We would be glad also to see a scheme encouraging people to help each other in taking bins out for collection and bringing them back.

Aire Valley Recycling does a good job, and deserves support from residents in putting out bags/boxes with appropriate contents on the correct day. Additional copies of the information card need to be circulated with encouragement for residents to ask for replacement bags/boxes. Recycling bins at Exhibition Road car park should be advertised as a useful additional resource. Composting in small household containers is now popular, and we encourage residents to take this up. Larger composting facilities could be made available at the allotments.

Litter-free Saltaire Some local traders have begun reducing use of plastic bags. Appropriate siting of bins and prompt replacement of any which are damaged would help to reduce litter. The work of BMDC cleansing staff is appreciated and we urge residents and visitors to do their part.

5. Local economy and regeneration

Saltaire is very much part of Bradford Metropolitan District. It is fortunate that the mill and model village survived the decline of the wool industry and are now contributing in different ways to the local economy. Jonathan Silver was visionary in daring to buy the mill and use the space for his own business ventures and a variety of tenants.

The mill remains a key part of the village economy, encouraging new businesses on Victoria Road. Shops on Gordon Terrace/Bingley Road face traffic problems as well the credit crunch, but there is a good mixture of businesses and most new ones have survived. The smaller shops dotted through and at the edge of the WHS also play an important part, as do businesses which are run from home by residents.

Planning applications SVS monitors new applications and requests to expand/alter existing business premises (change of use). Saltaire needs a healthy balance of services (solicitors, dentists etc), shops serving residents and tourists, and businesses providing food and drink. We champion the concerns of residents affected by local businesses. We also recognise the pressures on businesses providing amenities in Saltaire, and would support the re-emergence of a local traders association.

Tourism facilities Saltaire features prominently in BMDC tourism promotion, and we would welcome more partnership working with officers on this. Residents have taken a lead in many ways over the years, e.g. the Glen Tramway volunteers. Several residents have trained themselves to a high standard as tour guides. Initiatives which make Saltaire attractive to visitors have come from the vision and hard work of individuals, e.g. the Harmonium Museum and Saltaire Live concerts at Victoria Hall, Saltaire Bandstand music, Saltaire Festival and Saltaire Inspired.

In the 1990s local entrepreneurs opened a Village Information and Gift Shop. This was the main gathering point for tourists until its closure following the announcement that BMDC and Shipley College were co-operating to provide a new TIC. This project is moving slowly and we want to take action through the Saltaire Project Team to identify interim facilities for tourists

Saltaire within BMDC Securing long-term prosperity is the key challenge in BMDC's Big Plan for 2008-11: *more jobs, growing businesses and increasing education and skills levels were seen as the most important improvements.* The Big Plan sees regeneration as dependent on a *well-connected and environmentally sustainable transport system* and *high quality and sustainable new homes.* The preferred option for the Local Development Framework is likely to include some new housing and business premises in the Aire Valley. We believe that any new projects must be scrutinised with extreme care. Existing pressures on transport and infrastructure could increase to breaking point.

Within a diverse District, approaches to regeneration must be tailored to urban, suburban and rural situations. Saltaire is unique not only in its World Heritage status, but also in the combination of business, residential and recreational uses within its 20 hectares. The Saltaire Management Plan is currently being revised. We want to see a strategy for protecting the integrity of the village while making the most of what it can offer as a "living history" experience for residents and visitors.

6) **Social environment and cohesion**

Saltaire's compact network of streets offers many opportunities for neighbours to meet and talk. But coming out to an SVS meeting at Caroline Street Social Club, Salts Sports club or Victoria Hall is far from the norm! There are many reasons for a decrease in neighbourliness, and reversing the trend is not easy. SVS affirms the value of getting to know our neighbours - those who are residents and those who come regularly for work, study or recreation. By taking time to understand each other's needs and interests, we find ways to work together.

Exchanging news SVS holds at least one meeting each year specifically for residents to share news. A wide range of ongoing activities and new projects are presented. Understanding of the neighbourhood is increased and ways are identified to share time and skills. SVS encourages residents to attend Neighbourhood Forums and BMDC community consultations. We also run a community information stall during Saltaire Cricket Club's Sunday morning table-top sales at Victoria Hall.

Saltaire Sentinel and *www.saltairvillage.info* are valuable sources of information, both provided by individuals with a commitment to the village. SVS uses the web and email for communication, but also distributes a newsletter and invitations to its AGM by hand to properties in the village and neighbouring estates.

Shipley College It is enormously important that Saltaire has a college at its heart. In addition to daytime students, many people attend evening classes in buildings maintained by the college. Although student behaviour presents some problems, their energy and interests are a resource which is yet to be used properly within the village. We are committed to closer links with the college, beginning with the library where a Saltaire archive is opened to the public each summer. We are glad that Victoria Hall is managed by the college in a way that makes it attractive for lettings.

Saltaire Festival and Saltaire Inspired These are real success stories for our District. Beginning in 2003 as an SVS project, the Festival brings thousands of visitors each September, showcasing local talent. Saltaire Inspired began in 2006, releasing a flow of creative energy. The Advent Window trail, the Grand Christmas Switch On and the Arts Trail bring neighbours together, attract visitors and promote community cohesion in a delightful manner. SVS support has been given gladly.

Reaching out Saltaire has emerged from run-down and impoverished days to be seen as a privileged neighbourhood. Yet it has all the usual concerns about facilities for children and people with disabilities, drug use and disaffection among teenagers, and the needs of elderly people. With no village library or community centre it can be difficult for residents to find information and support. Churches, Medical Centre and Police Contact Point play a part, as do various local voluntary groups. Promoting more active community spirit is a significant task for SVS.

Numbers 1-6 of the new National Indicators for local authorities reflect the importance of communities of place and of interest. One priority for action in the BMDC Big Plan (p.42) is to *develop the ability of local people and groups to improve their communities by supporting informal social networks and local resources which will help raise people's aspirations.*

We are advocates and interpreters for this priority in Saltaire. Our commitment is long-term, rooted in local knowledge and inspired by a vision of what this 19th century model village can become in the 21st century.

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