

# It's stood for 100 years and with a little TLC now Bournville village will stand for 100 more

**VISITING** Birmingham's historic suburb Bournville is like taking a step back in time.

Unlike other parts of the city, where Victorian architecture often mixes awkwardly with modern buildings and properties designed over decades of development, Bournville remains a visual time warp.

The wide, pretty tree-lined streets that make up the 1,000 acres of the Bournville estate are dotted with 8,000 picturesque homes that have barely changed since they were first built – some as far back as 1895.

The story of Bournville began with the Industrial Revolution which saw those fed-up with the bleak reality of rural life flocking to cities in the hope of earning higher wages promised by factories, such as Birmingham's legendary chocolate makers Cad-

The historic Bournville village is undergoing a big transformation that will help preserve its unique character, cut tenants' fuel bills and make its picturesque properties more environmentally friendly. Consumer Editor **EMMA MCKINNEY** reports

bury. But Cadbury brothers George and Richard were not only shrewd businessmen, they were social philanthropists who were appalled at working class living conditions and wanted to provide decent housing for their workers.

It was in the late 1800s they decided to move their successful factory from the heart of Birmingham to land four miles south of the city centre, planning a model village they called Bournville.

Instead of the overcrowded industrial slums, the brothers sought to create a village, spread over 142 acres, with spacious houses providing decent sanitation and plenty

of green land surrounding them, as well as shops, places of worship, sports and community facilities.

In a move then unheard of, they insisted the properties were affordable for industrial workers and available for rent for those who could not stretch to buying their own homes.

In 1900 George founded the Bournville Village Trust, a charity set up to ensure the development and maintenance of the estate in a bid to preserve it for future generations.

The trust still exists today and is so determined to keep the Cadbury brothers' dreams alive that it works

tirelessly to ensure Bournville retains its social vision.

In recent years it has campaigned to keep the Cadbury's rule of no pubs or shops selling booze alive in an attempt to stop the area being blighted by drunken anti-social behaviour.

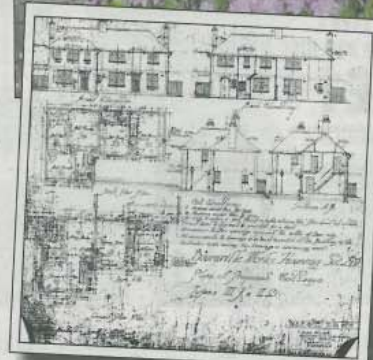
And it also imposes strict rules about what changes homeowners or tenants can make to the fabric of the houses in order that they do not lose their historic aesthetics.

But now some of the houses are undergoing a milestone makeover which is necessary to bring them into the 21st Century.

More than 310 properties rented by Bournville Works Housing Society (BWHS), which forms part of Bournville Village Trust, are being stripped of their 100-year-old timber doors and windows and replaced with modern PVC-U replacements.

It's the first time in Bournville's long history that plastic-framed windows and doors have been allowed on such a large-scale and forms part of a drive to make the village more environmentally-friendly.

It also comes after the Government has ordered social housing providers to slash the amount of carbon dioxide emitted from both their new and existing properties after new figures revealed that the average UK home produces six tonnes of CO2 every year.



Classic homes: One of the Bournville houses and, left, the original estate designs.



Standing the test of time: Historic houses in Bournville are being given a 21st century makeover to replace worn-out fittings and make them more environmentally-friendly. Above, the estate at the turn of the 20th century, top and in the 1930s.

## Working to preserve the unique character

SAM Chatterley, chairman of BWHS, said: "The old windows on our properties were draughty and cold so things weren't good for tenants, but from our perspective also required regular maintenance and painting.

"The paint built up and that compounded problems of the frames warping and twisting, so tenants frequently struggled to open their windows.

"As tenants and as a management committee we were clear from day one that we needed to do something.

"We're committed to the traditional values on which the society was founded and to preserving Bournville's unique character so the aesthetics of the new windows and doors were very important to us.

"We didn't want to damage or undermine the character of individual properties or the area at large."

He said the society held meetings with more than two-thirds of its tenants to discuss what the products should look like and spent months working with window manufacturers to ensure they hit the mark.

"The windows and door designs were changed several times until we came up with



Ringing the changes: Sam Chatterley, chairman of Bournville Works Housing Society, Adrian Millicheep, deputy director at Bournville Architects; Conroy Knapp, Sandra Chapman and Bob Stanton, of BWHS, and Dee Benning, commercial sales and operations manager at Stafford.

one that had a cream wood-style grain that had a strong match to the old timber windows," he added. "The interest we had from our tenants was superb and I think that it's fantastic that more than 100 years on from the Cadbury brothers' vision we are still working to preserve Bournville's unique character.

"The society was set up and the properties built to give tenants and Cadbury employees and former employees, secure, warm and comfortable homes,

and that's very much what we are doing now."

He said the energy-efficient windows and doors would not only slash CO2 emissions, but also cut heat loss by more than 20 per cent and save the tenant of an average three-bedroom home around £253 a year in electricity and gas bills.

"When consumers are facing soaring energy costs, I think this could not have come at a better time," said Mr Chatterley.

**OUR SAY: PAGE 14**

## Future-proofing vintage homes

ANDREW Reid, spokesman for Profile 22, the company that supplied the windows and doors, said: "It's predicted that three quarters of the existing housing stock will still be in use in 50 years' time. If we're to hit Government targets to cut CO2 emissions, refurbishment of these properties, many of which are in social ownership, is critical. "As an industry we have a unique opportunity to support this and the windows we have used for the Bournville properties

can cut carbon emissions from an average three-bedroom home by 17 tonnes over a ten year period – the equivalent of more ten double decker buses full. This has been a fascinating project and we're thrilled we've delivered both energy-efficient and environmentally-friendly products, but have helped BWHS to retain the character of buildings which play a very important and historic part of Birmingham." Dee Benning, spokesman for social

housing specialist window fabricator Stafford, which is installing the products, said: "I actually grew up not very far from Bournville and always knew it was a bit special, so on a personal level I've felt a lot of responsibility to get this one spot on and to make sure that what we're installing is as strong a match to original windows as possible.

"We have worked very closely with BWHS and architects to tweak and adjust the original concept window to get it just right."



Out with the old and in with the new: Workmen replace the old wooden windows with PVC-U.