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## Aachen Cathedral (Germany)

### No 3bis

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#### 1 Basic data

**State Party**

Germany

**Name of property**

Aachen Cathedral

**Location**

State of North Rhine - Westphalia

**Inscription**

1978

**Brief description**

The construction of this palatine chapel, with its octagonal basilica and cupola began c 790 – 800 AD under the Emperor Charlemagne. Originally inspired by the churches of the Eastern part of the Holy Roman Empire, the Cathedral was splendidly enlarged in the Middle Ages.

**Date of ICOMOS approval of this report**

6 March 2013

#### 2 Issues raised

**Background**

Aachen Cathedral was inscribed in 1978 under criteria (i), (ii), (iv) and (vi) as Charlemagne's Palace Chapel and Shrine, a unique artistic achievement and a key edifice of the Carolingian Renaissance. At the time of inscription no buffer zone was defined for the World Heritage Property.

In 2012 the World Heritage Committee took note of the clarifications concerning the boundaries of the inscribed property (WHC Decision 36COM 8D).

In 2009 the State Party requested a modification to the boundaries of the World Heritage Property under paragraphs 163 and 164 of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* and a modification to the name under paragraph 167, also informing that a buffer zone was under preparation. The World Heritage Committee decided not to approve the proposed minor boundary modification, considering that the proposal would have had a significant impact on the extent of the property and on its Outstanding Universal Value (33COM 8B50). Equally, the change to the name of the property was not approved.

The State Party has now submitted the proposal for establishing a buffer zone for the inscribed property according to paragraphs 107 and 164 of the *Operational*

*Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*.

**Modification**

The State Party explains that the rationale to define the buffer zone for the inscribed Aachen Cathedral (2,228 square meters) is based on the current state of scientific knowledge about the Carolingian palace complex and its related *vicus* as well as on the urban layout of Aachen in the Middle Ages. In particular, the historical presupposition that Charlemagne would have built his palace to be both a ceremonial and religious centre, and a celebration of his secular power, has guided the State Party in the selection of the proposed buffer zone (67ha).

The State Party also provides arguments, based on early findings, according to which Aachen Cathedral and the Town Hall were parts of the Carolingian Palace, and discusses recent discoveries from archaeological excavations, conducted since 2006, that support the theory that the palace complex was larger than initially assumed.

The proposed buffer zone is intended to secure the visual integrity of the inscribed property. It comprises the urban fabric of predominantly medieval origin enclosed within the city inner ring road, which was built on the line of the old city moat, and also some further elements – streets and monuments – lying outside the inner ring road.

The buffer zone has been legally defined as a conservation area according to paragraph 5 of the Law for the Protection and Preservation of Monuments in the Federal State of North Rhine Westphalia. This Law provides that changes within conservation areas are subject to authorization according to its Paragraph 9. At the local level, the area benefits from special protection measures for buildings, perspectives and the silhouette of the Cathedral and of the Town Hall according to a statute that was approved by the City Council in March 2011 (*Annex Satzung für die Erhaltung des Denkmalsbereiches „Innenstadt“* - in German only).

To ensure the protection of the views over the Cathedral and the Town Hall from major access roads or panoramic points around the city, a 'silhouette zone' has been created: it consists of a circle with a 220m radius encompassing the Cathedral, the Katschhof, the Town Hall, the remains of the Carolingian palace and part of the streets existing in Roman times. Important view cones to be safeguarded are defined by two tangents to the silhouette zone originating from each relevant panoramic point or area. The area formed by the sum total of the selected view cones is identified as Protected Area 2 and enjoys special provisions contained in the above mentioned regulations.

ICOMOS recognizes that the State Party has made a significant effort to define the buffer zone for the inscribed property on a scientific basis, as it appears from the research works *Denkmal bereich Aachen Innenstadt* and *Grundlagen für die Denkmalsatzung „Stadtkern Aachen“*,

which seem to have been used as the basis for the definition of the buffer zone and of the municipal regulations.

However ICOMOS notes that the streets and the monuments lying beyond the city inner ring road have not been specifically mentioned in the minor boundary modification dossier.

ICOMOS further observes that it is important that the State Party explains in more detail how the protection zones 1 and 2 function, and which protection measures have been established to safeguard the views over the inscribed property and the related monumental complex.

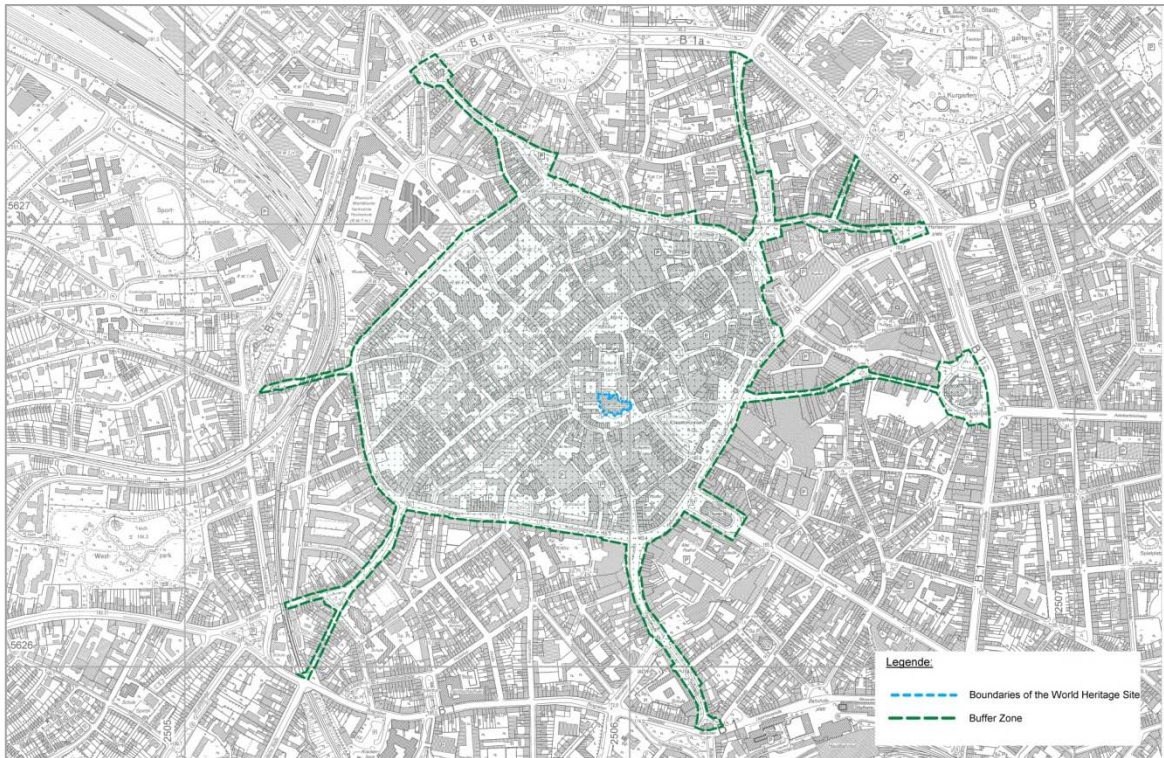
Finally the State Party has not explained how these provisions relate to the existing legal and planning framework, and what are the management implications should the buffer zone be approved, i.e. which authority will be responsible for the implementation of protection measures within the buffer zone, and how this authority will relate to and coordinate with the body responsible for the inscribed property.

### **3 ICOMOS Recommendations**

#### **Recommendations with respect to inscription**

ICOMOS recommends that the examination of the proposed buffer zone for Aachen Cathedral, Germany, be **referred back** to the State Party in order to allow it to:

- Explain the rationale which guided the inclusion within the buffer zone of some streets and monuments located outside the city inner ring road;
- Explain in more detail how the protection zones 1 and 2 functions and which protection measures have been established to safeguard the views over the inscribed property and the related monumental complex and clarify how these regulations relate to the existing legal and/or planning framework;
- Explain which will be the authority responsible for the implementation of these regulations within the buffer zone and how this authority will coordinate with the body responsible for the inscribed property.



Map showing the boundaries of the proposed buffer zone