

## Liverpool (United Kingdom)

No 1150

### 1. BASIC DATA

*State Party:* United Kingdom

*Name of property:* Liverpool – Maritime Mercantile City

*Location:* Liverpool, England

*Date received:* 29 January 2003

*Category of property:*

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *group of buildings*. In terms of *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (2002, 29, ii) this is a *historic town* that has evolved along characteristic lines and has preserved spatial arrangements and structures that are typical of the successive stages in their history.

*Brief description:*

The Maritime Mercantile City of Liverpool became one of the centres of world trade in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. It had an important role in the growth of British Empire and it became the major port for the mass movement of people, e.g. slaves and emigrants. Liverpool pioneered in the development of modern dock technology, transport systems, and port management. The city has a series of significant commercial, civic and public buildings, including St. George's Plateau.

### 2. THE PROPERTY

*Description*

The city of Liverpool is situated in north-western England on the Irish Sea at the mouth of the Mersey River. It is an example of a commercial port that had its major development at the time of Britain's greatest global influence - from the 18<sup>th</sup> century through to World War I. Today, Liverpool is a dynamic city with a resident population of 463,700; over 1,400,000 live in the former Merseyside County.

The nominated area is articulated in six specific parts, indicated below, and surrounded by a fairly large buffer zone:

1. Pier Head with the three main buildings: Royal Liver Dock, Cunard Building, and Dock Office, is the heart of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Liverpool;
2. Albert Dock Conservation Area, to the south of the Pier Head, comprises a series of warehouses and other facilities related to harbour activities;
3. Stanley Dock Conservation Area to the north of the Pier Head, comprises Dock Boundary Walls and several warehouses;
4. The historic centre around the Castle Street/Dale Street/Old Hall Street Commercial Area, extends to the east of the Pier Head. The area includes outstanding buildings from the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, in various architectural styles.
5. William Brown Street Cultural Quarter, to the east of the previous, includes St. George's Plateau, St. John's Gardens, and other public buildings;
6. Lower Duke Street, to the east of the Stanley Dock, comprises old warehouses and merchants' offices.

*Docks:* The development of enclosed commercial wet docks was pioneered at Liverpool in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Little of the fabric of these early docks has survived, following the 19<sup>th</sup> century remodelling of the docks when they became Britain's Atlantic gateway and the emigration port for much of Western Europe. Recent (2001) archaeological excavations however have revealed that much of Old Dock's dock basin wall, dock edge coping, timbers and cobbled surfaces have survived below ground. One of the earliest existing structures, the 1821 brick section of the dock wall adjacent to Princes Dock is attributed to John Foster. Jesse Hartley, the Dock Engineer from 1824 to 1860, designed the great fireproof warehouses at Albert Dock, Stanley Dock and Wapping Docks, ornamental hydraulic towers and pump houses, and enclosed further parts of the dock system with granite boundary walls with turreted gate entrances. His work was continued by the Lysters, father and son, who were Dock Engineers until 1897 and 1913 respectively, building also eg Waterloo Warehouse and Stanley Tobacco Warehouse.

*Warehouses and Commercial Centre:* Before the docks were enclosed, most of the warehouses were privately owned and were located in the town close to the merchants' houses in the streets focussed on the Old Dock, some distance inland from the Mersey River. Some of these warehouses survive in the Duke Street area. Commercial offices, banks and exchanges in and around Castle Street and Dale Street had replaced most of the earlier properties by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These now comprise a fine commercial district with massive ornate office blocks such as Tower Buildings and innovative buildings such as Oriel Chambers. The expression of commercial activity culminated in the trio of buildings at the Pier Head - the former offices of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board (1907), the Royal Liver Building (1911) and the Cunard Building (1916).

*Cultural Quarter:* The great prosperity of the city in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which was generated by shipping and trade of goods for Britain's burgeoning industries, was matched by a desire and an ability to display civic pride by the construction of prestigious public buildings. The monumental classical buildings erected around William Brown Street create one of the finest cultural groupings in the country. The public buildings combine with the public spaces of St. George's Plateau and St. John's Gardens and other surrounding buildings to create a townscape of great distinction. The main buildings include the magnificent St. George's Hall, a concert hall and money exchange, designed by Harvey Lonsdale Elmes in Greek-Roman Revival style, opened in 1855. There is also the Lime

Street Station, for the Liverpool-Manchester railway, built in 1867-1879.

### **History**

*Growth before 1715:* The earliest evidence of human activity in the area of Liverpool is from the late Mesolithic period, some 6,000 years ago. There are traces of Roman, Anglo-Saxon, and Viking settlements, followed by the Norman conquest. Liverpool was first mentioned in a charter of Prince John ca 1192. King John established Liverpool with the grant of a Charter in 1207 to enable him to mount an expansion into Wales and Ireland. Liverpool became a port for Irish and Scottish trade. Around the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Liverpool merchants began to develop trade with America. The Great Plague of London caused many merchants come to Liverpool, bringing their money and experience. There was also an increasing number of religious emigrants, eg Puritans, Protestants, and Quakers, to the New World. From the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> to the early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the increasing wealth resulted in new urban developments, and the construction of docks and warehouses for the harbour. The so-called Old Dock was opened in 1715, becoming the prototype of commercial enclosed wet docks and the catalyst of Liverpool's subsequent rise to the status of a world port.

*18<sup>th</sup> century:* The principal early imported cargoes were tobacco, sugar and rum. After 1700, Liverpool joined Spain, Portugal, Bristol and London in the Triangular Trade, trading with cotton, manufactured goods, black slaves, and other goods between Africa, the West Indies, America and Europe. Liverpool became the most important centre in the world for the organisation of the slave trade. A Northern Triangular Run grew with the opening of Salthouse Dock in 1753, facilitating the export of salt, part of the system of exchange of various products between Newfoundland, and the West Indies, as well as Ireland and the Mediterranean countries. Businessmen and tradesmen came to Liverpool from all parts of Britain to take advantage of the opportunities, and by 1801 Liverpool had become the largest town in England.

With the increase of the capacity of the harbour, a reliable transport system was needed: first in improving the navigation of existing rivers, then by the construction of **canals**. The Mersey and Irwell Navigation opened in 1736. The Sankey Brook Canal from the St. Helens coalfield to the River Mersey (1757) is seen as the first industrial canal in the world. From 1770 to 1816, a canal was cut from Leeds to Liverpool, the longest and most successful in Britain. With the take-off of the **Industrial Revolution** in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century Liverpool's dock facilities became critical to this process, involving the cotton industry of the North West of England, as well as the iron and steel-making industries in the country.

*19<sup>th</sup> century:* When ships were dependent on wind-power, storage of goods was essential, and **warehouses** became a part of the Liverpool townscape, especially from the late 18<sup>th</sup> till mid 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, eg Goree Warehouses (1793), others at King's Dock (1795-1812), Albert Dock Warehouses (1847) for imports, and Waterloo Warehouse (1868) for grain. The importance of **coal** became marked with the widespread introduction of steam power for production machines and transportation. The first

**steamship** entered the Mersey in 1815, the first trans-Atlantic steamer from Liverpool was the *Royal William* in 1833, initiating a new era for shipping and leading to increases in tonnage going through Liverpool.

The idea of a **railway** between Liverpool and Manchester was promoted by a committee of Liverpool businessmen. The line was complete by June 1830; it was the first railway in the world to carry passengers to regular timetables as well as goods. The opening of the railway enabled goods from Liverpool Docks to be transported to other parts of Great Britain more efficiently than before and the port came to depend upon the railways for maintaining its global trading position. The Liverpool **Overhead Railway** was built 1889-1893, becoming the world's first elevated electric railway.

Until the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Liverpool's traders mostly worked from home. As the scale of operations expanded, the scale and character of the centre area changed. Increasing profits from trade justified the construction of large, purely **commercial buildings**, three and four storeys high and subsequently more. At the same time, there were urban renewal programmes and new streets and areas were constructed in the town.

The prosperity of Liverpool and its role as a point of **emigration** to the New World attracted thousands upon thousands of people from across Europe. Many stayed and added to the unsanitary housing conditions in central Liverpool. In response to these problems, Liverpool introduced many advances in health care, becoming a forerunner in the country in mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. After the abolition of the transportation of slaves in 1807, ships continued to transport emigrants from Liverpool to America in vast numbers. Many European migrants came through Liverpool because it had the necessary shipping lines, choice of destinations and infrastructure, including special emigration trains.

*20<sup>th</sup> century:* At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Liverpool claimed to be 'The Second City of the Empire'. The First World War, however, slowed down the development, causing unemployment. Later, the economy recovered, and some fine buildings were constructed.

During the Second World War, Liverpool suffered from bombing more than any other provincial town in Britain due to its strategic importance. After the war, there has been much rebuilding. Some of the old docks have been modernised and the approach from the sea was improved. The economic drawback continued however, and the city has lost nearly half of its inhabitants (from 850,000 in 1930 to 450,000 today). Nevertheless, the last decade has seen a positive turn, and the city has made major efforts to regenerate its cultural and economic life.

### **Management regime**

#### *Legal provision:*

The properties in the nominated area are in a mixed ownership. Some of the main buildings are owned by the Liverpool Municipality, the National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, British Waterways, Merseytravel, and English Partnerships. Several properties are owned by private companies.

The areas enclosed in the WH nomination are legally protected, and most of the buildings and structures are listed for protection either as Grade I or Grade II.

*Management structure:*

The nominated site is within the boundary of Liverpool City Council, which includes the Local Planning Authority and the Local Highway Authority. There are several other organisations and agencies with management responsibility for the properties in the nominated area, including especially English Heritage, Liverpool Vision, Merseytravel, and others. Most of these public bodies are represented on the Liverpool World Heritage Site Bid Core Steering Group, created with the purpose to coordinate the management of the proposed World Heritage site.

The nominated area is subject a great of different plans and policies, including the Liverpool Unitary Development Plan and the Strategic Regeneration Framework (July 2000). There are several detailed master plans for specified areas, and conservation plans for the individual buildings. A full Management Plan is in preparation for the nominated site and is expected to be in place in late 2003 or early 2004.

*Resources:*

The conservation and development of the nominated area can benefit from a wide range of grants and financial resources both from public and private sources.

***Justification by the State Party (summary)***

The nomination document indicates that Liverpool has had an important role in: the development of world trade, the industrial revolution, the growth of British Empire, the mass movement of people, pioneering dock technology, port management, building construction methods, and transport systems. The urban landscape of Liverpool has a series of significant commercial, civic and public, and domestic buildings. Liverpool is also repository of significant historical and cultural collections.

Liverpool - Maritime Mercantile City is proposed for inscription as 'The supreme example of a commercial port at the time of Britain's greatest global influence'. The nominated site is a complete and integral urban landscape that provides coherent evidence of Liverpool's historic character and bears testament to its exceptional historic significance.

*Criterion ii:* Liverpool was an innovator and pioneer in many fields, especially dock technology, port management and transport systems. One of Liverpool's most significant achievements was the construction in 1715 of the Old Dock, the world's first commercial enclosed wet dock. This was the beginning of a movement to create artificial docks in tidal estuaries that spread throughout the British Empire and the world. Liverpool's technologically innovative dock complexes with their warehouses eventually set the standard for all other port developments.

*Criterion iii:* Liverpool was the leading international seaport of the British Empire and Europe's foremost transatlantic port from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Liverpool was a highly successful general-cargo port, for both import and export, and a major European port of trans-Atlantic emigration. ... The urban

landscape of the site, including its architecture, layout, dock complexes and transport systems, combined with the comprehensive cultural and historical records held on the site, form a unique testimony to the commercial acumen and mercantile strength of the British Empire in the period from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. No other port in Britain, the former British Empire or the world bears such testimony. ...

*Criterion iv:* The nominated site is a complete and integral urban landscape that includes an outstanding architectural and technological ensemble of buildings, structures and archaeological remains. The landscape of the site developed primarily during the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries during the Industrial Revolution, the growth of the British Empire and general European expansion throughout the world. These processes are significant stages in human history that have shaped the current geo-political, social and economic environment. ...

### **3. ICOMOS EVALUATION**

***Actions by ICOMOS***

An ICOMOS expert mission visited the site in September 2003. ICOMOS has also consulted its International Scientific Committee on Historic Towns and Villages, CIVVIH.

***Conservation***

*Conservation history:*

The development of Liverpool as an important maritime mercantile city started in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Most of the harbour structures of this period were however renovated and replaced in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In any case, the nominated historic area does preserve a representative selection of buildings dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The town suffered a setback after the First World War, though it recovered later, only to be subject to a massive bombing during the Second World War. After the war, the town has been largely rebuilt. The nominated historic area, however, luckily has preserved a substantial number of historic buildings. In the 1970s, Liverpool suffered in terms of economy, but in the recent decade the city has again emerged as a vital part of the British economic and cultural life. This has allowed the conservation and rehabilitation of many of the historic structures as well.

*State of conservation:*

*Area 1:* The three Pier Head buildings are in good state. There is discussion re the construction of a fourth building in a parking area. The proposal is reported to be still at the design stage and no decisions have yet been taken.

*Area 2:* The Albert Dock area has a successful regeneration project of one of the largest docks and the warehouses around it with full respect for heritage buildings. The site includes remains of the early 18<sup>th</sup>-century dock, now in a parking area, which will be subject to a development programme – again with full respect for heritage aspects.

*Area 3:* The Stanley Dock, includes successful regeneration projects. It also includes large warehouses, for which there is no use at the moment, and abandoned dock areas in the buffer zone. The main challenge is a development project within the buffer zone. The City argues that having the area recognized will ensure its protection and that the new buildings will be sympathetic to the heritage status. There is no doubt that the City is committed to ensure that the new buildings are to be acceptable in such a heritage area [most of which is private property].

*Area 4:* The historic and commercial centre of the city, includes some outstanding buildings from the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, which are in good state of conservation. The area also includes some late twentieth century buildings. Except for one central building, the others are in the periphery of the nominated area and do not detract too much from the heritage zone.

*Area 5:* The William Brown Conservation area includes some of the most important public buildings of Liverpool including St Georges Hall, as well as a number of minor but important heritage buildings, memorials, and the old railway station. The area is well conserved and some major restoration projects are being done at the moment.

*Area 6:* The Duke Street includes a large number of original warehouses which are being successfully transformed for modern use as part of a major regeneration project. It is the most residential of the nominated sites and as such important to include. The main challenge is the building of infill structures, a remnant of the war destruction. Still, the new buildings are done in keeping with accepted principles.

#### *Management:*

The ICOMOS mission was generally satisfied with the planning and development control mechanism. There are strong legal and practical mechanisms to ensure the protection of the historic core areas and the individual buildings. The Buffer zone is considered well defined and large enough to protect the nominated area. The local City Government is determined to ensure that there will be sufficient protection in the Buffer Zone.

A new construction has been planned right in the centre of the port area, next to the existing historic buildings. It is obvious that in such sensitive areas, it is fundamental to have strict control of the design, materials, and volume, as well as of the general character and use of any new buildings.

It is understood that the local authorities are currently in the process of preparing a policy for tall buildings. While appreciating that due regard is given to the nominated historic areas and their visual context, ICOMOS nevertheless draws attention to the need to vigilantly monitor the development.

#### *Risk analysis:*

The centre area of Liverpool is subject to development projects, including the construction of offices, and much of the nominated core zone and buffer zone are in private ownership, which may cause pressure for change. The city authorities are taking steps to monitor and control such changes, including a policy for tall buildings, as well as eventual environmental hazards, such as air pollution,

groundwater level, and flooding. Steps have been taken in view of risk preparedness programmes. The transportation system in the city centre is currently under study, and some important changes are being proposed to improve it and make more sympathetic to the environment.

#### ***Authenticity and integrity***

The existing urban fabric of the nominated area dates from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, with an emphasis on the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The city has suffered from the Second World War destruction as well as from the long economic decline after the war.

The historic evolution of the Liverpool street pattern is still readable representing the different periods. There have been some alterations after the war destruction in 1941. In the nominated area, the main historic buildings have retained their authenticity to a high degree. There are some parts, especially in the buffer zone, where the damages from the war period still exist. There are also new constructions from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, of which not all are to high standard. The main docks survive as water-filled basins within the nominated site. They are not any more operational, though one dock area is operated by Merseyside Maritime Museum, and another is used for ship-repairs. The warehouses are being converted to new uses. Here attention is given to keep changes to the minimum.

Judging in the overall, though, the nominated area has well retained its historic authenticity and integrity. In fact, the ICOMOS expert mission was complimentary, emphasising that not only the buildings were in good state but every effort has been made to preserve the minor detailing of architecture such as the original pulleys of the docks and various other cast iron features.

#### ***Comparative evaluation***

The nomination document presents a good study comparing Liverpool as a significant port city within the British Empire. It is seen in relation to other British ports, such as London, Hull, Bristol and Glasgow, as well as various port cities in other countries, including Hamburg, Marseille, Barcelona, Baku, Bombay, New York, St. Petersburg and Shanghai. Note is also taken of ports already inscribed on the World Heritage List. The latest of these is Valparaiso, which was inscribed in 2003.

ICOMOS concurs with the conclusions of the study, which has shown that the qualities and values of Liverpool clearly distinguish its outstanding universal value in relation to the others, both in terms of its maritime mercantile function and its architectural and cultural significance.

#### ***Outstanding universal value***

##### *General statement:*

The proposed nomination of Liverpool consists of selected areas in the historic harbour and the centre of the city, defined as ‘the supreme example of a commercial port at the time of Britain’s greatest global influence’. Liverpool

grew into a major commercial port in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when it was also crucial for the organisation of slave trade. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Liverpool became a world mercantile centre and had major significance on world trade being one of the principal ports of the British Commonwealth. Its innovative techniques and types of construction of harbour facilities became an important reference worldwide. Liverpool also became instrumental in the development of industrial water canals on the British Isles in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as well as of railway transport in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. All through this period, and particularly in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Liverpool gave attention to the quality of its cultural activities and architecture. To this stand as testimony its outstanding public buildings, such as St. George's Hall and the many museums. Even in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Liverpool has given a lasting contribution, which is remembered in the success of the Beatles, who originated from this city.

#### *Evaluation of criteria:*

*Criterion ii:* Liverpool was a centre for innovation in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and it had great importance for the building up of the international mercantile systems throughout the British Commonwealth. This was mainly due to its importance as a seaport. The canal and dock system and the warehouses were outstanding when they were created. The fact that they have survived to this day gives them great importance as historic testimonies. In addition to the industrial heritage of the site, Liverpool architecture also reflects the importance and development of the city as a port, which had important influence in various countries.

*Criterion iii:* Liverpool is an exceptional testimony to the maritime mercantile culture as it developed in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, contributing to the construction of the British Empire. It bears testimony to the various aspects of this culture, including the slave trade, until its abolition in 1807, as well as to the immigration from northern European countries to America.

*Criterion iv:* The importance of the British Empire is well reflected in this criterion. On the one hand, the architecture of Liverpool reflects the grandeur of the Empire, on the other, the buildings, the architecture and the industrial heritage are an exceptionally well preserved technological ensemble illustrating a significant period of human history. Liverpool was the most important port of its period, through which the major commercial routes were fed but also through which millions of passengers, both slaves and paying emigrants, migrated.

## **4. ICOMOS RECOMMENDATIONS**

### *Recommendation for the future*

ICOMOS recommends particular attention to be given to monitoring the processes of change in the nominated historic areas and their surroundings. This concerns especially changes in use and new constructions.

It is understood that a new construction is planned in the central part of the nominated port area, i.e. the Pier Head, which has the potential to adversely impact its integrity. Considering the sensitivity of this area, ICOMOS recommends that the State Party inform the World Heritage Committee about the project and its impact on the

nominated property, prior to decision about its inscription on the World Heritage List.

### *Recommendation with respect to inscription*

That, subject to satisfying the above condition, the property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria ii, iii and iv*:

*Criterion ii:* Liverpool was a major centre generating innovative technologies and methods in dock construction and port management in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. It thus contributed to the building up of the international mercantile systems throughout the British Commonwealth.

*Criterion iii:* the city and the port of Liverpool are an exceptional testimony to the development of maritime mercantile culture in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, contributing to the building up of the British Empire. It was a centre for the slave trade, until its abolition in 1807, and to emigration from northern Europe to America.

*Criterion iv:* Liverpool is an outstanding example of a world mercantile port city, which represents the early development of global trading and cultural connections throughout the British Empire.

ICOMOS, March 2004