
Cathedral, Alcázar and Archivo de Indias in Seville (Spain) No 383rev

1. BASIC DATA

State Party: Spain

Name of property:

Cathedral, Alcázar and Archivo de Indias in Seville

Location:

Province of Seville, Autonomous Community of Andalusia

Inscription: 1987

Brief Description:

Together these three buildings form a remarkable monumental complex in the heart of Seville. The cathedral and the Alcázar – dating from the Reconquest of 1248 to the 16th century and imbued with Moorish influences – are an exceptional testimony to the civilization of the Almohads as well as that of Christian Andalusia. The Giralda minaret is the masterpiece of Almohad architecture. It stands next to the cathedral with its five naves; the largest Gothic building in Europe, it houses the tomb of Christopher Columbus. The ancient Lonja, which became the Archivo de Indias, contains valuable documents from the archives of the colonies in the Americas.

Date of ICOMOS' approval of this report: 17 March 2010

2. ISSUES RAISED

Background:

At its 33rd Session (Seville, 2009) the World Heritage Committee requested the State Party (Decision 33COM 7B.123) to define a buffer zone for the World Heritage property and to submit a map by 1 February 2010, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 34th session in 2010.

This request was in response to concern expressed by the Committee at the potential adverse impact of the proposed 40 storey (178metre) Cajasol tower on the western bank of the Guadalquivir river approximately 600 metres from the boundaries of the Alcazar, which

with the other two buildings are approximately 300 metres from the east bank of the river.

Modification:

The State Party has proposed a buffer zone that links the three buildings and covers an area within which are spaces and buildings that were directly associated with, or have some tangible bearing on, the Latin American colonisation. The buffer zone thus relates to the Outstanding Universal Value of the property in terms of the complementarities of the three inscribed buildings as an illustration of the involvement of Seville in the processes of Latin American colonisation.

This buffer zone includes the remains of the inland port and spaces and buildings associated with the development of trade between the Old and New worlds. The nine key buildings are listed in the submitted report and historical details provided.

The wider landscape of the buffer zone has been set out as a result of two studies on the historic urban landscape and the city landscape of the outskirts. This acknowledges the way the city has grown and altered over the past two centuries in such a way that the relationship of the three inscribed buildings to their urban context and to the river has been significantly altered and now make it difficult to trace the historical boundaries of the city. The studies identify key views.

The buffer zone comprises 205 hectares and covers the area surrounding the three inscribed buildings and part of the river where the port was located. The buffer zone demarcates an area within which the Giralda Tower will dominate the skyline and protects lower level views of the Tower.

Protection

The nine key buildings within the buffer zone are designated monuments.

The whole of the buffer zone is included within the extended Conjunto Histórico de Sevilla that was declared by Royal Decree on 2nd November 2009. The buffer zone covers nine sectors. The decree allows for Special Protection Plans to be drawn up – and these exist for five sectors – and also for catalogues of monuments to be created, and these exist for five sectors. It is however acknowledged that the Special Protection Plans do not cover all aspects of spatial planning.

However, the 2007 Historical Heritage Act of Andalusia allows for visual impact assessments to be carried on proposed projects and it is said that this would apply to development that might impact on the property – although not the Cajasol Tower that was approved prior to its implementation.

The General Urban Planning scheme of 2006 includes a special plan for the Puerta Triana, within which the proposed Cajasol Tower would be located and this allows for 'for-profit' construction up to 225 metres in height. The buffer zone does not therefore cover the area of the Cajasol Tower.

ICOMOS considers that the proposed buffer zone that has been carefully delineated to surround an area that can be seen as the immediate setting for the three inscribed buildings and part of their wider context in terms of the monuments and spaces within the buffer zone that have links to the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.

ICOMOS further consider that the protection for this buffer zone is adequate in terms of its designation as part of the Conjunto Histórico de Sevilla. The City Council has agreed to complete the catalogues for the sectors where these are still needed and this will further protect both the inscribed property and the buffer zone.

ICOMOS also considers that whereas the proposed buffer zone will protect the immediate setting, it remains concerned that protection outside this area in the wider setting will still be needed in terms of potential developments of tall buildings that will need to be considered through visual impact assessments for their possible impact on Outstanding Universal Value.

3. ICOMOS RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the proposed buffer zone for the Cathedral, Alcázar and Archivo de Indias in Seville, Spain, be **approved**.

ICOMOS notes that the City Council has agreed to undertake the remaining catalogues for the sectors within the Buffer Zone and urges the State Party to ensure that these are in place as soon as possible.

ICOMOS also notes that development outside the buffer zone in the wider setting will be subject to impact assessments on the inscribed property under the 2007 Historical Heritage Act and urges the State Party to ensure that these are applied rigorously.



Map showing the boundaries of the proposed buffer zone