

---

# Abbey and Altenmünster of Lorsch (Germany) No 515

---

## 1 Basic data

### State Party

Germany

### Name of property

Abbey and Altenmünster of Lorsch

### Location

District of Bergstrasse, State of Hesse (Hessen)

### Inscription

1991

### Brief description

The abbey, together with its monumental entrance, the famous 'Torhall', are rare architectural vestiges of the Carolingian era. The sculptures and paintings from this period are still in remarkably good condition.

### Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

10 March 2011

## 2. Issues raised

### Background

The World Heritage inscribed property is in two parts: the site and remains of the first monastery founded on the River Weschnitz in 764AD and the site and remains of the second, much larger monastery including the Torhalle, founded 650 metres to the west on higher ground (the dune) only three years later and consecrated in 774AD. The extent of the original area of the first monastery (the Altenmünster) has not been established. The original area of the second monastic enclosure, taken as being the area enclosed within the remaining Abbey wall and its traceable line, has been reduced by about one third with the construction of a road (Nibelungenstrasse) and residential development across its northern part.

The Periodic Report of 2004 noted that the status of the boundary of the World Heritage property was inadequate and that no buffer zone had been defined. Subsequently a cadastral map showing the boundaries of the two parts of the World Heritage property was provided in 2005. This does not include the area of the Abbey site originally enclosed by the Abbey wall and now built over, to the north of Nibelungenstrasse. It encompasses the State-owned Abbey site south of Nibelungenstrasse and municipality-owned green land around it to the east and

south, extending beyond the Abbey wall to cover possible remains of ditch or moat. The Altenmünster site is covered to the extent of the municipality-owned cadastral lot 100/1, encompassing known archaeological remains.

No buffer zone was shown.

The Abbey and Altenmünster of Lorsch Management Plan of 2009 proposes a buffer zone surrounding and uniting the two parts of the World Heritage inscribed property and including the area of the former Abbey site to the north.

The proposed buffer zone will encompass the known area of the second Abbey, including the area of the monastic enclosure now built over, to the north of Nibelungenstrasse. It will then extend north-east along the north side of Nibelungenstrasse and its continuation until it crosses the Weschnitz River (now canalized). It then follows the east bank of the Weschnitz canal, crossing back south of the Altenmünster nominated area along the south-east boundaries of cadastral districts 106 and 77, west along the northern boundaries of cadastral lots 185-7 running due west until it meets the footpath 424/4 when it turns south to Karolingerstrasse, then west along that street, including the built properties along the southern boundary of the Abbey nominated area, to the corner with Römerstrasse. From there it runs north along Römerstrasse to the Marktplatz, including the built properties to the west of the Abbey nominated area, across Nibelungenstrasse and north to proceed around the northern boundary of the original monastic enclosure.

The World Heritage Property and the proposed buffer zone are protected by the Monument Protection Act of the State of Hesse, administered by the Departments of Monument Preservation and Archaeology/Palaeontology and the State Administration of Palaces and Parks of Hesse, and the planning provisions of the Municipality of Lorsch. The Abbey site is partly owned by the State of Hesse and partly by the Municipality of Lorsch; the site of the Altenmünster is owned by the Municipality of Lorsch.

The concerns of ICOMOS have revolved around the need for protection of the archaeological remains of the area of the Abbey site north of Nibelungenstrasse, which was originally included within the Abbey walls, and the need to link the two areas of the property. These concerns are met by the extent of the proposed buffer zone, which also covers a considerable area around the Altenmünster property.

ICOMOS also considered that protection was needed for the important approach view of the Torhalle from the west and for views and the land formerly associated with the abbey in the vicinity of the axis between the Torhalle and the Altenmünster. ICOMOS considered that the red line boundary on figure 8.15 'Protected Areas and Buildings'

in the Management Plan (p.63) would be more appropriate in the latter respect.

The proposed modification was considered at the 34th session of the World Heritage Committee (Brasilia, 2010) and the Committee adopted the following decision:

Decision 34 COM 8B.56:

*The World Heritage Committee,*

1. *Having examined Documents WHC-10/34.COM/8B and WHC-10/34.COM/INF.8B1.Add,*

2. *Refers the proposed buffer zone for the Abbey and Altenmünster of Lorsch, Germany, back to the State Party to allow it to:*

a) *Consider whether the boundary of the proposed buffer zone could be extended to the west of the World Heritage property to protect the important approach view of the Torhall and include Marktplatz and Benedikterstrasse, or whether this view could be protected by other means;*

b) *Consider whether the boundary of the proposed buffer zone could be extended further to the north to protect the line of the central axis connecting the Altenmünster site and the Lorsch Abbey site and enclose the Klosterfeld area on the north side of Alte Bensheimer Strasse;*

3. *Encourages the State Party to keep the World Heritage Committee informed of any development project concerning the property, its buffer zone, and wider setting in conformity with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention.*

#### **Modification**

In its response of 14 December 2010, the State Party has stated:

(a) The buffer zone will be extended to the west to protect the important approach view of the Torhalle and include the Marktplatz as well as the Benediktinerstrasse and the buildings surrounding both places. The area is protected by the Monument Protection Act of the State of Hesse as well as by a municipal development plan. The Management Plan will be amended to declare the boundary accordingly.

(b) The central axis connecting the two parts of the Abbey site is not the Alte Bensheimer Strasse as might be misleadingly indicated by the plan, but is within the eastern part of the proposed buffer zone. Therefore it will be protected in accordance with the Management Plan.

ICOMOS welcomes the extension of the buffer zone to the west as proposed in point (a).

In relation to point (b) ICOMOS notes that the proposed revised buffer zone boundary has been extended to the south-east but not at all to the north of Alte Bensheimer Strasse. It does not follow the red line boundary on

figure 8.15 'Protected Areas and Buildings' in the Management Plan (p.63) which extends the northern boundary of the original monastic enclosure to run parallel to the north side of Nibelungenstrasse/Alte Bensheimer Strasse. ICOMOS considers that the piece of land extending along the north-east extension of Nibelungenstrasse from the northern boundary of the original monastic enclosure to meet Alte Bensheimer Strasse needs to be protected from development that might impact on the view of the Torhalle as approached along Alte Bensheimer Strasse from the north-east. This is shown as protected within the red line boundary on figure 8.15 'Protected Areas and Buildings' Buildings' in the Management Plan (p.63). ICOMOS considers that this piece at least should be included in the buffer zone.

The State Party also provided information on the proposed open air museum to be located outside the buffer zone on agricultural land on the north side of Alte Bensheimer Strasse, shown as Land-use Plan 53 on the buffer zone plan provided with the State Party's letter.

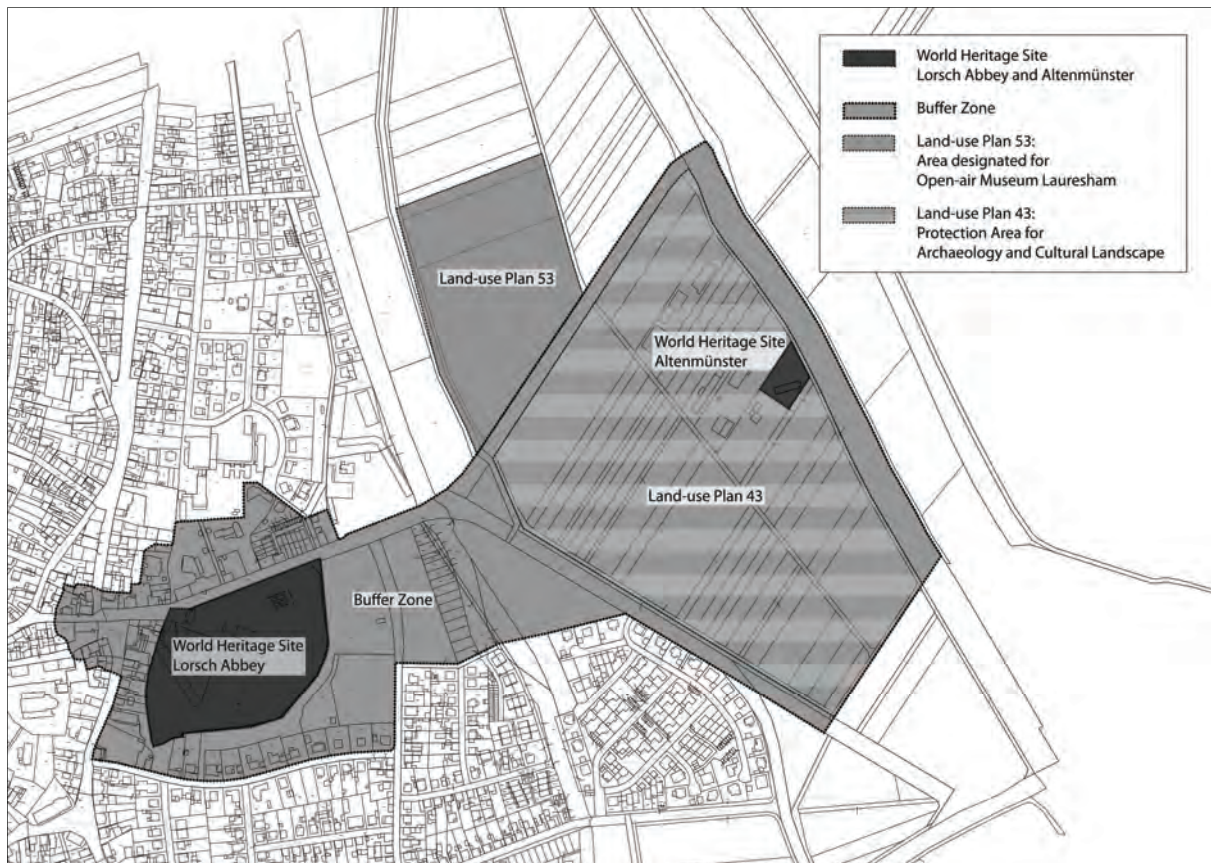
### **3. ICOMOS Recommendations**

#### **Recommendation with respect to inscription**

ICOMOS recommends that the proposed buffer zone for the Abbey and Altenmünster of Lorsch, Germany, be **approved**.

ICOMOS further recommends that the State Party give consideration to the inclusion of the piece of land extending along the north-east extension of Nibelungenstrasse from the northern boundary of the original monastic enclosure to meet Alte Bensheimer Strasse, in order to protect the view of the Torhalle as approached along Alte Bensheimer Strasse from the north-east.

ICOMOS encourages the State Party to keep the World Heritage Committee informed of the open air museum project in conformity with Paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*.



Map showing the boundaries of the proposed buffer zone