

**Identification**

<i>Nomination</i>	The church village of Gammelstad, Luleå
<i>Location</i>	County of Norrbotten (Norrbottens län)
<i>State Party</i>	Sweden
<i>Date</i>	23 October 1995

**Justification by State Party**

Luleå Gammelstad is of international importance as the foremost representative of Scandinavia's church towns, a type of town-like milieu that has been shaped by people's religious and social needs rather than by economic and geographical forces, being intended for use only during weekends and church festivals.

It represents a type of Nordic settlement that has nearly disappeared. It combines rural and urban life in a remarkable way. The custom of staying close to the church throughout the weekend has created a way of life and style of building whose main features have been preserved unchanged for four hundred years.

It is considered to conform with **criteria ii, iv, and v**.

**Category of property**

In terms of the categories of property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, Gammelstad is a *group of buildings*.

**History and Description***History*

The Lule river and its valley have provided an effective route between the Gulf of Bothnia and the mountains of Lapland, and beyond to the coast of northern Norway, from earliest times. Agricultural villages had been established on the fertile lands along the coast and in the lower portion of the river valley as early as the 13th century. A market centre developed on the islands in the Luleå district in the 14th century. When the Swedish-Finnish kingdom, supported by the Archbishop of Uppsala, expanded into this region as an act of deliberate colonization, to counteract Russian pressure, the present stone church of Gammelstad was built at the turn of the 14th century. Its unusual size and lavish decoration testify both to the prosperity of the region, based on trade in furs and fish from Lapland, and to its political and religious significance.

The settlement became the meeting place for three groups - merchants from the coastal regions of the Gulf of Bothnia, local farmers, and the Sámi (Lapps) of the hinterland. Of these, the farmers were the largest group: the parish of Luleå comprised 47 villages with over 400 farms by the mid 16th century. A social framework evolved around the parish church, influenced strongly by two factors - trade and church visits from outlying villages and farms, whose inhabitants were unable to attend church services and return to their homes within a single day. By the beginning of the 17th century the site of the church and its neighbouring market place had developed into a *church town* (a translation of the Swedish term for this type of settlement), ie a cluster of wooden cottages and stables to provide sleeping accommodation for churchgoers at weekends and festivals. This type of settlement is considered to have developed from several sources: the dormitory cottages of merchants who visited it only occasionally; the stables built near churches to protect horses during the bitter winters of northern Sweden, and the legal obligation upon parishioners to attend Sunday services and religious festivals. In all, 71 church towns were created in northern Sweden.

At the same time the merchant town developed on more formal lines, with the granting of a town charter in 1621, as part of a deliberate policy of regulating trade. By this time the merchants were all local inhabitants: the earlier links with Stockholm had been severed. However, the phenomenon of progressive land upheaval following the end of the last Ice Age led to the abandonment of the old harbour and the relocating of

the trading centre closer to the sea in the mid 17th century; the new settlement took the name of Luleå, and was also known as Nystan (New Town), the earlier church site being renamed Gammelstad (Old Town).

Gammelstad continued as the parish centre, though the parish itself had diminished in size as population growth led to the creation of new parishes. It was an administrative and judicial centre, and also provided the focus for social activities of all kinds. Because of the need to ensure that farm animals were continuously supervised, it was not possible for an entire family to take part in religious observances at the same time. As a result the tradition of "church holidays" for older parishioners two or three times a year developed, along with an annual two-week period at midsummer for the younger people to meet, to prepare themselves for confirmation.

Gammelstad was untouched by the industrialization of the region in the later 19th century, made possible by the introduction of the railway from the south, which mitigated the isolation during winter, when the sea froze over. The advent of the automobile saw the gradual disappearance of most of the stables in the church town. Despite the relocation of the settlement to Luleå, the *church village* (ie that area of houses that were permanently occupied), this quarter retained its town plan simply because there was no pressure for it to be changed during a period of stagnation. As a result the houses built in the 20th century as part of the dormitory area of Luleå all lie outside the early settlement, and Gammelstad has retained its historical integrity.

### *Description*

The town plan of Gammelstad demonstrates three periods of urban layouts: the medieval town, laid out radially; the 17th century checkerboard plan; and the peripheral 20th century development. In the core area proposed for inscription the permanently inhabited church village and the church town are physically integrated, but in social terms they are completely distinct.

The *church town* consists of 424 buildings, divided into 555 separate rooms. All are built of wood, painted in red and with doors and window frames picked out in white. The doors, which face the street, are very varied in design, as are the window shutters, essential where buildings are not occupied continuously. Most of the doors bear a pyramid device, a motif from pagan antiquity reinterpreted as a Christian symbol depicting an altar with a sacrificial fire. The roofs were originally made of wood, but with the advent of metal sheeting this became the favoured roofing material, to reduce fire risk and water leakage during thaws. A specific form of rolled steel sheeting has become accepted as the traditional roofing material.

Most of the cottages are known to have been in existence in 1817, and many of them are at least a hundred years older. Dating is difficult because traditional forms and materials were used in replacing buildings destroyed by fire. Some are known to have been moved here from elsewhere.

The buildings of the *church village* are in the same idiom as those in the church town but are larger, to suit the requirements of permanent occupation. The most heavily built-up area of the church village lies to the east of the church, where development was mandatory in the 17th century; the cottages of the church town are most dense to the south and west, but there is considerable intermingling at the boundaries.

The *church*, built in stone at the beginning of the 15th century, is the largest of its type in northern Scandinavia. The brick vault was not consecrated until 1492; it was decorated by artists from Stockholm and is crowned with the coat of arms of the archbishop. At the same time choir stalls were added, since the church served as the consistory for the priests of the region. A fine altarpiece from Antwerp was installed in the 1520s. The church was further embellished in the early 18th century with a new pulpit and wooden plaques in the local version of Late Baroque.

The church is surrounded by a stone wall, with imposing gatehouses, making it a place of refuge and protection against marauding mercenaries in the 15th and 16th centuries. The existing wall is mostly a reconstruction, crowned by an earthen rampart in place of the earlier wooden palisade. The bell-tower (1852) is detached from the church (unusual in this region), and forms a third gatehouse.

Notable buildings within the proposed area are the *Chapel of Bethel* on the church square, an inn from 1806 to 1908 and then refitted as a Baptist chapel (now the municipal tourist bureau); the *Cottage of the Separatists*, to the west of the Chapel of Bethel; the *Parish House*, built in 1754 as the fourth in its line, which served as courthouse, jail, administrative office, and council meeting place; the imposing *Tithe Barn* (1790), to the south of the church; the *Inn*, built at the turn of the 18th century; and a number of private houses, notably the *Mayor's Residence*, the *Captain's Residence*, and the *Guest House*, mostly dating from the foundation of the 17th century town.

## **Management and Protection**

### *Legal status*

The church is protected under the 1988 Act concerning Ancient Monuments and Finds, which requires all work to be authorized by the Central Board of Antiquities. This statute also covers any archaeological finds within the nominated area.

The Municipality of Luleå has approved detailed town-planning regulations, based on the requirements of the 1993 Planning and Building Act. These are very extensive in their application and are among the most rigorous in Sweden, affecting every aspect of the appearance of the historic town and the materials to be used.

The extensive buffer zone around the nominated area is covered in part by the town-planning and building regulations. The remainder is an Area of National Interest under the provisions of the National Resources Act, within which there are substantial constraints on land-use.

### *Management*

The buildings making up the nominated area are in different ownership. The church is the property of the Nederluleå Parish Board, which also owns seven of the church cottages, all of which are on land owned by the State, administered by the Diocese of Luleå, and managed by the Parish Board. The Board and the Municipality own a number of other buildings in the nominated area, but the majority are in private ownership.

There is a Comprehensive Plan for the whole Municipality of Luleå, as laid down in the 1993 Planning and Building Act. This sets down general guidelines for the preservation of Gammelstad, which are developed in detail in the town-planning regulations. There are contracts between the Nederluleå Parish Board and the owners of church cottages governing permissible and prohibited activities and works; the cottages are inspected annually.

The responsible agency is the Central Board of National Antiquities, which collaborates with the Norrbotten County Administrative Board, the Norrbotten Museum, the Municipality of Luleå, and the Nederluleå Parish Board.

## **Conservation and Authenticity**

### *Conservation history*

A Royal Decree was issued in 1817 to regulate the use and maintenance of Sweden's church towns, to protect them against social and physical decay as well as fire. The first systematic documentation took place in the 1920s, and the earliest town-planning regulations date back to 1934. Some 200 of the cottages were restored in the 1970s, care being taken to maintain traditional forms and materials.

To assist cottage owners, advice and guidelines on conservation and maintenance are available from the Municipality of Luleå. A brochure entitled *To be the owner of property in the Church Village is to be responsible for a small part of a unique cultural heritage*, which has been distributed to every property owner, contains advice on streetscape elements, paving, gardens, lighting, roofs, facing materials, colours, windows, doors, etc. There are very stringent fire-prevention regulations in force.

### *Authenticity*

The authenticity of the historic church village and church town that is the subject of this nomination is very high. The town plan, which grew up organically over several centuries, is preserved in its entirety. The buildings are completely authentic in form and measures are in place to prevent their losing that authenticity. There is also a strong concern for authenticity in materials: the town-planning regulations contain strict provisions relating to restoration and conservation works.

## **Evaluation**

### *Action by ICOMOS*

ICOMOS consulted its International Committee on Historic Towns and Villages. An ICOMOS expert mission visited Gammelstad in 1995.

### *Qualities*

The church towns of northern Scandinavia are a unique form of settlement, based on trade and religion. Beginning as trading settlements, they became the foci for religious observances among the widely scattered farming communities in this thinly populated region. The church cottages, used only at weekends and during church festivals, testify to the strength of Christian faith in Sweden from the medieval times to the present day. They are to be found juxtaposed against larger, more conventional houses for the officials and merchants who lived permanently in the settlements, both types of building to be found clustering around the church. Gammelstad is an exceptionally well preserved example of this type of settlement, and one where no effort is spared to maintain its character and authenticity.

### *Comparative analysis*

Of the original 71 church towns and Sámi towns in northern Sweden, only twenty survive relatively unchanged. Four of these (Öjebyn, Löfvånger, Skellefteå, and Gammelstad) still retain several hundred church cottages. However, Löfvånger is no longer in use as a church town, having been turned into a conference centre. At Skellefteå the original church town burned down in 1828 and was rebuilt on a new site, some distance from the church. Whilst Öjebyn retains its basic plan, many of the original cottages have been burned down or demolished, and the church was rebuilt after being burned down by Russian troops in 1721.

In Finland a few church cottages survive at Pietarsaari (Jakobstad) and there are some 150 church stables remaining out of the original three hundred or so around the church at Närpio (Närpes). However, neither of these Finnish sites compares in size or completeness with Gammelstad.

Thus it will be seen that Gammelstad, which is still operating as a church town, is the oldest, most complete, and best preserved of these settlements.

### **Recommendation**

That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria ii, iv, and v*:

Gammelstad is an outstanding example of the traditional church town of northern Scandinavia, and admirably illustrates the adaptation of conventional urban design to the special geographical and climatic conditions of a hostile natural environment.

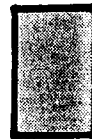
ICOMOS, October 1996

# The Church Village of Gammelstad

## Zones with different degrees of legal protection

The nominated area: 16,3 ha  
The buffer zone: 245 ha

### Designations



The nominated area.



The nominated area with its immediate surroundings is of archaeological interest.

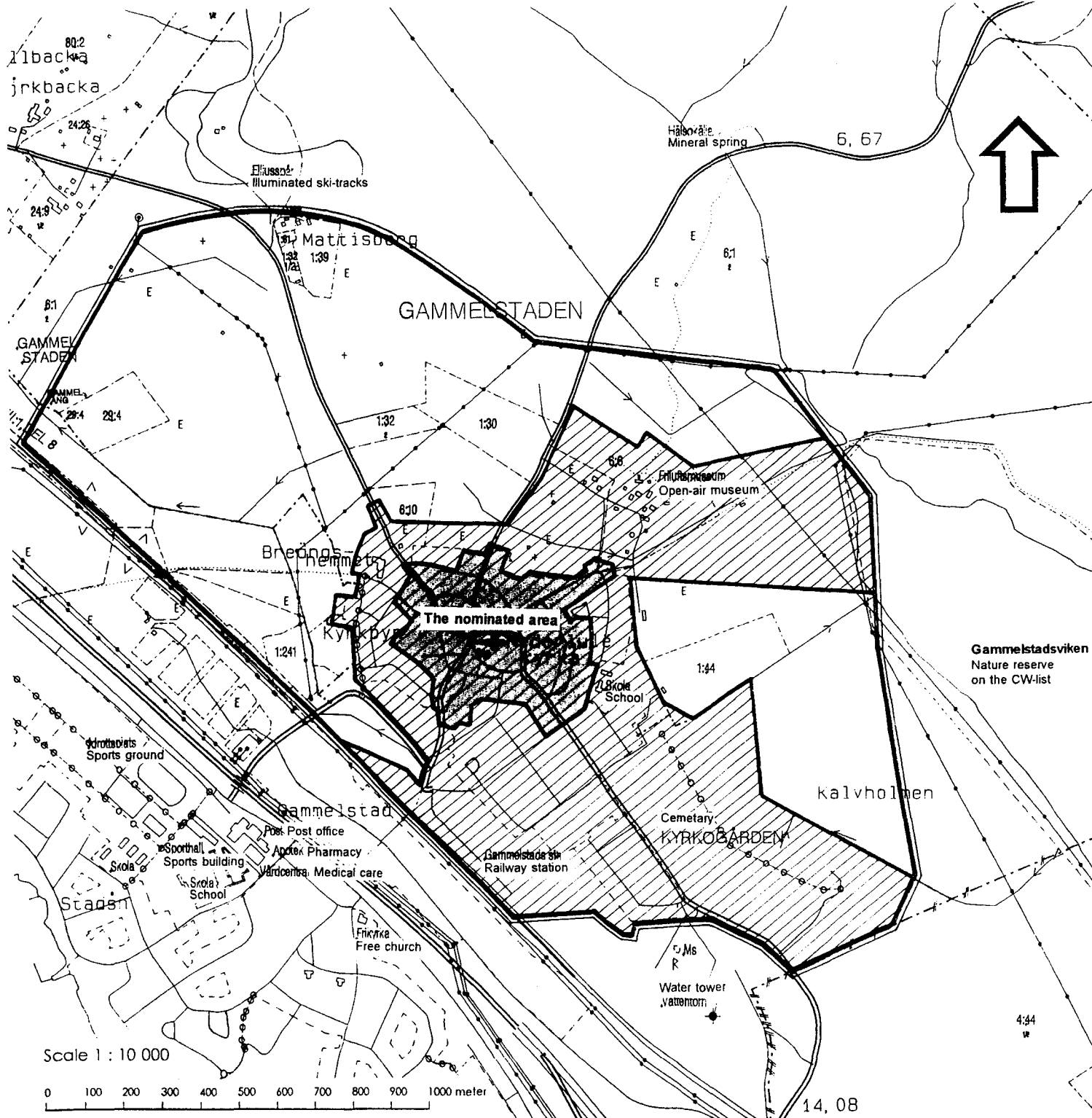


The Buffer zone.

Area with a Comprehensive plan under Swedish Planning and Building Act ( See appendix 7 - 8 )

The Central Board of National Antiquities has pointed out the Buffer zone as an area of National Interest according to the National Resources Act.

The National Resources Act ( Swe abbr. NRL ) protects certain land and water areas from use for purposes other than those consistent with specified interests national importance. Among these protected interests is the interest of maintaining the cultural heritage.

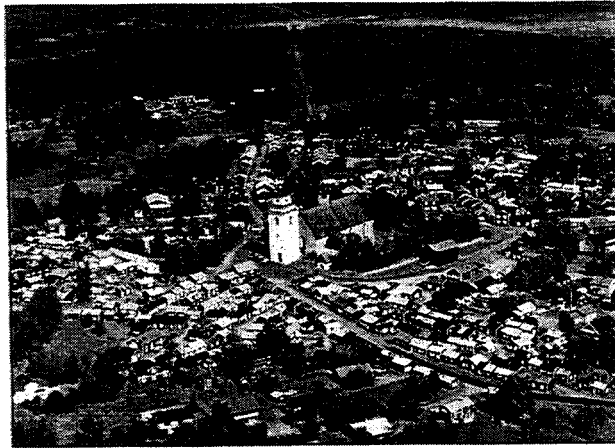


Scale 1 : 10 000

0 100 200 300 400 500 600 700 800 900 1000 meter

Gammelstad : plan de délimitation du bien proposé pour inscription  
et de la zone-tampon

Gammelstad : delimitation of the nominated property and buffer zone



Gammelstad : vue aérienne du sud-ouest  
Gammelstad : aerial view from the south-west



Gammelstad : ruelle  
Gammelstad : lane

Gammelstad : l'église médiévale  
Gammelstad : the medieval church

