

Historic Centre of Tallinn (Estonia)

No 822

1. BASIC DATA

State Party: Republic of Estonia

Name of property: Historic Centre (Old Town) of Tallinn

Location: City of Tallinn

Inscription: 1997

Brief Description:

The origins of Tallinn date back to the 13th century, when a castle was built there by the crusading knights of the Teutonic Order. It developed as a major centre of the Hanseatic League, and its wealth is demonstrated by the opulence of the public buildings (the churches in particular) and the domestic architecture of the merchants' houses, which have survived to a remarkable degree despite the ravages of fire and war in the intervening centuries.

Tallinn is on the Baltic Sea Coast.

2. ISSUES RAISED

Background

The inscribed area covers mainly the Old Town within the medieval walls, and some of the bastions and entrenchments from the 16th century. The rest of the bastions, 19th century re-building of the fortifications and 19th century historic urban structures are in the buffer zone.

At the time of inscription, the ICOMOS evaluation noted that: *'The regulation zone around the Conservation Area, which is nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List, includes some of the quarters around the Old Town, and in particular some of the wooden buildings of Kalamaja and the harbour district. ICOMOS recommends that consideration be given to the inclusion of the most significant part of this area in the nominated area.'*

The inscribed area of 60 ha lay within the boundary of the Old Town Conservation area which covers 113 ha. The buffer zone of 370 ha extended beyond the Conservation Area.

A joint UNESCO/ICOMOS expert mission in December 2005 noted that: *'However, it must be taken into account that the so called "buffer zone" is actually consisting of many elements built or organised in different times and with different purposes. Therefore every answer on if and how it is possible to make any change must consider the resulting output in that area and not only what effect, it will have on the preserved old town area.'*

The "buffer zone" itself is not at all deprived of historic value, if we correctly enlarge our idea of history beyond the middle age that marks the Old Town. These considerations should be taken into account by those in charge of designing new proposals and evaluated by the city responsible authorities when issuing the permits.

Considering all the issues involved, an integrated Management Plan extended to the "buffer" zone could be developed as an instrument of protection as well as of social and cultural development for the whole urban community.'

Modification

The State Party proposal is to extend the inscribed area to 113 ha and extend the buffer zone to 2,253 ha.

The proposed extension to the core area would encompass the total area of historic fortifications which form a green area around the medieval city, and some key 19th century buildings such as a church and two theatres. Its boundaries would coincide with those of the Old City Conservation Area.

The proposed extension into the buffer zone would encompass a much larger area of the bay on which Tallinn lies, together with key views to and from the Old Town, including from ships in the bay. The enlarged buffer zone would include part of the wooden suburbs of Kadriorg, Kassisaba, Kalamaja, and Süda-Tatari. The Buffer Zone would coincide with the Buffer Zone for the Old City Conservation Area.

Protection

In 1999 the Buffer Zone for the Old City was enlarged to 2,253 ha. This Buffer Zone is protected by the same legislation as the Conservation Area.

The enlarged areas of both core and buffer zone would thus be protected to the same degrees as the existing core area, as a national monument of Estonia regulated by Conservation Act and Statutes of the Tallinn Old City Conservation Area.

ICOMOS considers that while the enlarged buffer zone would provide enhanced protection to the core zone, developments in the wider setting outside the buffer zone would still need to be considered for their impact on the values of the core zone.

Management

ICOMOS notes in the State of Conservation Report that no progress has been made with a Comprehensive Management Plan for the property and its buffer zone, as requested by the Committee at its 30th and 31st Session, 30 COM 7B.84 and 31 COM 7B.95. This plan would need to encompass the enlarged area and its enlarged buffer zone.

This Management Plan should set the context for these other plans, such as Thematic Plan for high buildings, or a Strategic Plan for the City, through relating outstanding universal value to the spatial patterns of the city and thus to what needs protection.

Integrity

The inclusion of the total area of the historic fortifications would support the integrity of the property.

Authenticity

ICOMOS is satisfied with the authenticity of the extended area.

Outstanding Universal Value

The extended area supports the values of the property recognised at the time of inscription as set out in the justification for criteria (ii) and (iv).

3. ICOMOS RECOMMENDATIONS

ICOMOS recommends that the minor modification to the boundaries of the core and buffer zones of the Historic Centre (Old Town) of Tallinn, Estonia, should be ***approved***.

Furthermore, ICOMOS:

- Urges the State Party to progress a comprehensive Management Plan for the enlarged area and its buffer zone as a framework for other strategic plans for the city
- Stresses the need for development in the wider setting beyond the buffer zone to be interrogated for its impact on the values of the core zone.



Map showing the revised boundaries of the core zone and the buffer zone