

WORLD HERITAGE LIST

Karlskrona (Sweden)

No 871

Identification

<i>Nomination</i>	The naval port of Karlskrona
<i>Location</i>	Blekinge County
<i>State Party</i>	Sweden
<i>Date</i>	3 July 1997

Justification by State Party

The naval port of Karlskrona received much interest during the 18th century and was the model for several similar projects in Europe. The technologically and architectonically distinctive shipyard complex was the military industrial centre of the Baltic region for more than 100 years.

Criterion ii

Karlskrona is the clearest, best preserved, and most authentic naval complex from the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries.

Criterion iii

The complex is a unique relic of Sweden's period as a major power, and of the North European Baroque movement's attempt to create unity between the layout of the city, the manufacturing areas, and the surrounding countryside. The whole is characterized by the consistent long-term aim of cultivating efficiency and aesthetic, still clearly discernible in the infrastructure and open spaces. The naval heritage is upheld not least by over 300 years of uninterrupted activity within the naval port and the shipyard.

Criterion iv

Category of property

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *site*.

History and Description

History

The naval port of Karlskrona was founded in 1680, at a time when Sweden was a major power whose territory included modern Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and parts of north Germany. The first step towards domination of the Baltic came when Sweden secured direct access to the

North Sea ports and broke Danish control over Öresund Sound, the key to Baltic trade. When peace with Denmark was declared in 1658 with the Treaty of Roskilde, Skåne, Blekinge, and Gotland became Swedish territory.

A garrison and shipyard were installed at the small port of Bodekull, renamed Karlshamn in honour of King Karl XI. However, after a short Danish occupation (1676-79), it was recognized that this was not the ideal site for a naval base, and so in 1680 Karl XI issued a charter for the foundation of a new town in the east of Blekinge on the islands of Wämö and Trossö, to be known as Karlskrona and to serve both as a port and as a naval base. Tradesmen and merchants from this hitherto Danish area were forced into the new town by the withdrawal of their charters from the established towns of Kristianopel and Ronneby, and the region was progressively assimilated into Sweden.

The naval installations that developed at Karlskrona, beginning with a shipyard and storage facilities, were initially supervised by Erik Dahlbergh, Quartermaster General, responsible for the defences of the Swedish kingdom. Naval architects and craftsmen were sent from Stockholm, and houses were built to receive them. The shipyard began with two building berths, two quays, two forges, and five warehouses; the first keel was laid down in December 1680 and the first ship was launched the following year.

Karlskrona became a seat of government in 1683, the year in which Dahlbergh drew up the definitive plans for the town and its fortifications. By the time Gustav III took the throne by means of a *coup d'état* in 1772 it had become the third largest town in Sweden. There was a frenzied burst of activity at this time, with the building of a large fleet (accompanied by renewed building activity in the town itself) aimed first at Denmark and then Russia. Gustav's military adventures achieved very little, and he was assassinated by his political enemies among the nobility, who resented his assumption of absolute power. The loss of Finland in 1809 saw the end of the Swedish imperial dream.

Despite the political decline of the country, Karlskrona continued as the main base for the Swedish navy. A number of modernization and expansion projects took place during the 19th and 20th centuries, to keep pace with developments in naval and military tactics and technology (although the shipyard was slow to adopt new technologies, with the result that wooden hulls did not give way to steel until the 1880s). World War II saw the modernization of some of the older fortifications and the installation of new facilities for defence against aerial attack. Since that time there has been a progressive diminution of activity in the naval area, though it still plays an active role in the Swedish defence system.

The town has been damaged by fire, most severely in 1790. As a result, rebuilding of the destroyed buildings, numbering over 400, was carried out using stone. However, the original street layout was largely preserved.

Description

The plan of Karlskrona integrates strategic imperatives with the classical ideal. The Baroque layout with wide main streets radiating out from a central square lined with majestic public buildings is clearly discernible in the present-day town. It was planned by Erik Dahlbergh and Karl Magnus Stuart on the orders of the Lord High Admiral, Hans Wachtmeister.

The centre of the town is *Stortorget* (Great Square), at the highest point of the island of Trossö. Here is located the two main churches of the town, *Heliga Trefalighets Kyrka* (Holy Trinity Church) and *Fredrikskyrkan*, both dating from the first half of the 18th century. The monumental character of the buildings around the square is continued by *Rådhuset* (the City Hall), from the same period, and later public buildings such as the Concert Hall, the City Library, and the Post Office. The centre of the square has been used up to the present day for an open-air market.

To the south of *Stortorget* and on the same main north-south axis is *Amiralitetsparken* (Admiralty Park), at its intersection with the main east-west street, *Amiralitetsgatan-Alamedan*. To the north, at the main entrance to the town there is the fine open space known as *Hoglandspark*.

The naval harbour is located to the south of the town, from which it was originally separated by an impressive enclosure wall, only small sections of which survive. *Amiralitetsslätten* (the Admiralty Parade Ground), with a fine clock tower in the middle, lay on the main north-south axis and was incorporated into the open space formed by *Amiralitetsparken* when the wall was demolished. Among the historic protected buildings lining it are *Högvakten* (the Guardhouse) and *Skeppesgossekasernen* (the Ships' Boys Barracks).

To the south of the Parade Ground is *Gamle Varvet* (the Old Shipyard). This is made up of a number of fine buildings dating mainly from the late 18th century, commissioned by Frederic Henric af Chapman, Shipyard Admiral of Karlskrona from 1780 until his death in 1808 and many of them designed by this gifted master shipbuilder and architect. In addition to functional buildings such as storehouses and the registration office and model house, the group contains *Chapmanbostället* (the Chapman House) and its associated buildings, which housed the Admiral and his senior officers.

On the other side of *Amiralitetsslätten* is *Artillerigården* (the Artillery Yard), an area of reclaimed land housing barracks, ordnance storehouses, workshops, and a hospital. The point of land on which they were built is protected by the *Aurora Bastion*, dating from 1704. This is also the site of *Amiralitetskyrkan* (the Admiralty Church), believed have been designed by Erik Dahlbergh and consecrated in 1685. The wooden structure was always intended to be temporary, awaiting rebuilding in stone, but this was never carried out.

To the east of the town lies *Stumholmen*, a group of three islands now merged into one by landfilling, which was designated in the original plan of 1683 as a manufacturing and victualling area. It is the site of naval buildings ranging from the 18th century to the 1950s, the

most outstanding of which is *Slup- och Barkassskjulet* (the Launch and Longboat Shed), completed in 1787. It is a huge building with an inclined ground floor, to accommodate vessels, and with an intricate structure of considerable sophistication. Other buildings on *Stumholmen* are *Kronobagariet* (the Crown Bakery: 1730s), *Bastion Kungshall's* (1680s), the enormous *Kungshallsmagasinet* (Kungshall Storehouse: 1787-92), and two timber seaplane hangars from the 1920s. The island went gradually out of military use in the 1970s and 1980s. The City Council drew up a development programme for what were by now rather dilapidated buildings, and these have been rehabilitated and put to new uses, whilst apartment blocks have been built on reclaimed land.

The main naval shipyard developed on the island of *Lindholmen*, to the south of *Gamla Varvet*. Since 1961 it has been divided between a civil shipbuilding company, *Karlskronavarvet AB*, and the Swedish Government. The buildings that make up the ensemble were built for specialized purposes, which is reflected in their diversity of form and size.

The oldest structures, *Gamla Skeppsbädden* (the Old Building Berth), cover the beach area on the south side of Trossö itself, and include some careening bridges dating from 1683. *Polhelmsdockan* (the Polhem Dock) was blasted out of solid rock in 1712-24, and is claimed to be the first structure of its kind in the world; it is still in use. *Virkesskjulen* (the Timber Sheds) were the work of af Chapman around 1800, when timber storage was moved from the water to dry land.

One of the oldest buildings is *Finska Kyrkan* (the "Finnish Church"), a two-storey building on the island of *Södertjärna*, now joined to *Lindholmen* by reclaimed land. Dating from 1696, it was originally using for tarring ropes, being later adapted for use as a storehouse.

Västra Varvet (the West Shipyard) is now the location of the Naval Shipyard, with many impressive modern installations and buildings. It does, however, preserve some items of historical interest, notably *Femfingerdockan* (the Five-Finger Dock). This was constructed in the 1750s in order to provide covered accommodation on land for the vast fleet being assembled at that time. The complex contains important items of ancillary plant such as a swinging chamber, mast crane, and pumphouse. One of the most prominent features of Karlskrona is *Gamla Mastkranen* (the Old Mast Crane), built in 1803-6. The main body is built in brick and is nine storeys high. Its topmost section is in wood, with copper sheeting. All the complicated mast-crane apparatus - capstans, winding gear, windlasses, etc - designed for manual operation, remains in position.

The approaches to Karlskrona are protected by the fortifications on the island of *Kungsholmen* in the *Aspö Strait*. Dahlbergh drew up plans for a fortress and gun tower in 1679, but there was nothing more than a temporary earthwork there until the very end of the 18th century, when first Russian and then English fleets blockaded Karlskrona during the Napoleonic Wars. A sizeable garrison was put on the island with considerable artillery. Between 1820 and 1850 major investment resulted in the construction of substantial permanent defences, and these were renovated in the 1870s. Since

1900 Kungsholmen has been a strategic fortress of major significance, a role that it continues to play. The buildings on the island, which is functional but well proportioned, are an epitome of the evolution of military tactics and consequently of military architecture over some three centuries.

There are several other forts guarding the approaches to Karlskrona. *Drottningkärs Citadel* lies on the opposite side of the Aspö Strait from Kungsholmen. It is an imposing fortress in granite, the work of Erik Dahlbergh, mostly built in 1680-1700 but not completed until the mid 18th century. It consists of a large keep enclosed by four bastions linked by curtain walls, and almost entirely surrounded by water; it is linked by a causeway to a ravelin protected by two lunettes on the main island. The round fortress towers of *Godnatt* and *Kurrholmen* are the only two of six such structures planned in the mid 19th century as a second line of defence beyond Kungsholmen and Drottningkärs Citadel. They were adjudged to be incapable of resisting the high-velocity artillery of the time and so were never used.

Two further buildings associated with Karlskrona are included in the nomination. The group of buildings that make up the *Skärva* mansion were built in 1785-86 as a summer residence for Frederic Henric af Chapman, the Shipyard Admiral of the time, who was also responsible for their design, in collaboration with the philosopher and architectural theorist Carl August Ehrensvärd. They are an unusual combination of classical ideals and Nordic building traditions, with the use of skills associated with the shipbuilding of the time. The main house is a single-storey structure with an H-plan that combines classical and rococo styles. The garden pavilion is in classical form, whilst the wooden tower painted to resemble sandstone is Gothic.

During the second decade of the 18th century Christopher Polhem, the engineer responsible for the technologically innovative dock in Karlskrona, designed a dam and waterworks at Lyckeby. The Admiralty bought up two old mills on the Lyckeby river to supply the two Crown bakeries in Karlskrona and built a new, large mill. *Kronokvarnen* (the Crown Mill) was completed in 1721 and maintains its original appearance largely intact. The stone bridge between the dam and Kronokvarnen was added in the 1780s.

Management and Protection

Legal status

The shipyard area, including the peripheral defensive structures and the central sections of the naval base, were designated Areas of Historic National Interest by the National Antiquities Board on 5 November 1987. As a result, they are protected under the provisions of the Natural Resources Management Act of June 1993.

Within this designated area there are also around 100 buildings that are protected individually under the provisions of the 1988 Heritage Conservation Act. The central sections of the naval base and the shipyard area are also registered as ancient monuments, and so are protected by Chapter 2 of the Heritage Conservation Act. Any interventions must be authorized by the appropriate

government department or agency, and there are severe penalties for non-compliance.

In 1987 central Karlskrona was designated as an Area of National Historic Interest for Preservation. The city is therefore required to safeguard the historical values within the centre by means of a comprehensive Development Plan. Buildings and sites considered to be of historic value are identified for protection in the City Council's detailed Development Plan, and the treatment of others is controlled by the local Planning and Building Committee within the terms of the 1987 Planning and Building Act.

In addition, certain areas, such as Stumholmen, are governed by special regulations issued by Karlskrona City Council, which require property owners wishing to make interventions that may impact existing buildings to submit proposals for approval. The overall appearance of the island as a whole must be taken into consideration when deciding the shape, design, colour, schemes, and details of new buildings.

The City Council has announced plans for extending the Development Plan to cover the whole of the civilian parts of the city, the shipyard area, and the archipelago.

The City Development Plans cover extensive areas beyond those proposed for inscription on the World Heritage List, and thus constitute (with the areas of water that surround much of the nominated areas) an effective buffer zone as required by the World Heritage Committee.

Management

The western section of the shipyard area and most of Lindholmen, zoned as an industrial area, are the property of the private company Karlskronavarvet AB. The eastern section, which is the present-day naval base, belongs to the Swedish State, as do the other defence and other military structures on the offshore islands, and in two cases to Karlskrona City Council.

The various management bodies are Karlskronavarvet AB, Sydkustens Militärkommando (Naval Southern Command), Karlskrona Kommun, Statens Fastighetsverk (National Housing Board), Fortifikationsverket (Fortifications Agency), and the County Administrative Board.

Domestic and business properties in the town are in private ownership.

The land-use planning controls in force at municipal level are referred to above. A preservation programme for the architecture of the city was drawn up by the City Council in 1985, directed principally to preservation of the overall plan and urban fabric, with special attention given to certain areas and buildings of special historical significance.

The State-owned buildings are administered by the National Housing Board and the Fortifications Agency, which have strategic property planning programmes to safeguard their functional and cultural values. There are specific plans applied for more than ten of the most important historical buildings.

The County Administration, the Naval Museum, the National Housing Board, Karlskrona City Council, and

the County Museum are currently considering the setting up of an information service for the general public, with a view to the development of an active tourism policy.

Conservation and Authenticity

Conservation history

Interest in preserving the architectural heritage of the naval base began as part of the “national romantic” movement of the later 19th century. Practical steps were taken in the 1920s, when important buildings such as Cordage Storehouse I and the Registration Office and Model Building underwent major restoration. Around this time the Central Board of Antiquities (*Riksantikvarieämbetet*) designated some of the buildings as national monuments.

Since the 1950s the Fortifications Agency has made conscious efforts to preserve the older buildings. During the 1980s it began to draw up plans for preservation, colour schemes, and landscaping for all the buildings within its purview. A score of buildings have individual preservation plans which are kept under constant review, leading to comprehensive maintenance and restoration works being carried out under the supervision of architects and antiquarians.

Within the civilian town the City Council has used its various powers to ensure that restoration work is carried out on major buildings and that the historic townscape is preserved.

Authenticity

The degree of authenticity in the overall plan of Karlskrona - both in the civilian town and the naval base - is high. The original 17th century plan has been preserved and the urban fabric is intact, whilst the naval installations reflect the evolution of shipbuilding technology and military fortifications over three centuries.

The level of authenticity in individual buildings is also high. Effective planning control has ensured that there have been few inappropriate restoration or interventions in the civilian areas, whilst the military structures have been allowed to evolve according to the exigencies of changes in strategy and policies. Some inappropriate recent additions have been removed and others are scheduled for demolition. Insertions of new buildings into reclaimed areas between military buildings that have been sympathetically adapted to civilian use have been handled in a way that does not jar with the existing appearance of the areas concerned.

Evaluation

Action by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS expert mission visited Karlskrona in January 1998. ICOMOS also consulted a leading British historian who is recognized as a world expert on historic naval bases and ports on the cultural significance of the town.

Qualities

Karlskrona is an exceptionally well preserved and complete example of a European naval base, built in the period when these were being established by several major maritime powers.

Comparative analysis

Equivalent establishments are to be found in England (Portsmouth, established 1495; Chatham 1547; Devonport 1691), France (Rochefort 1666), Denmark (Holmen, Copenhagen 1690), and Russia (Kronstadt 1702).

Portsmouth, Devonport, Rochefort, and Kronstadt all suffered from enemy aerial bombardment in World War II and lost important elements. The older part of Chatham Dockyard, however, is exceptionally well preserved and is a still virtually intact example of a major English dockyard from the great era of the sailing navy (1700-1850). Its 18th century landward defences remain in a remarkable state of preservation. Chatham, however, is a river dockyard, some distance from the sea. Its buildings also reflect the different size and administrative and functional traditions of the British Royal Navy, and so it complements Karlskrona.

Brief description

Karlskrona is an outstanding example of a European planned naval city of the late 17th century in which the original plan and many of the buildings have survived intact, along with installations that demonstrate its subsequent development up to the present day.

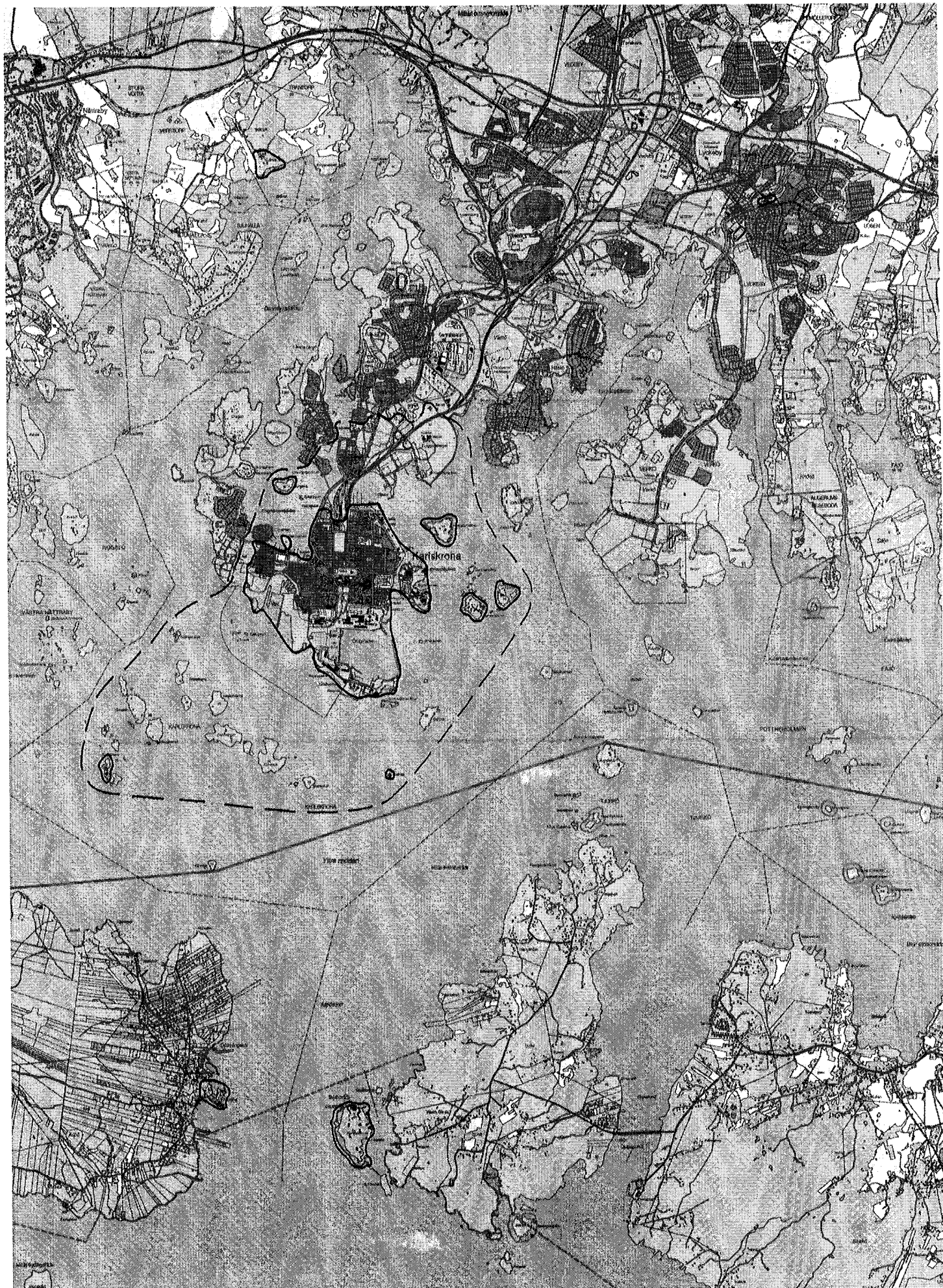
Recommendation

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

Criterion ii: Karlskrona is an exceptionally well preserved example of a European planned naval town, which incorporates elements derived from earlier establishments in other countries and which was in its turn to serve as the model for subsequent towns with similar functions.

Criterion iv: Naval bases played an important role in the centuries during which naval power was a determining factor in European *Realpolitik*, and Karlskrona is the best preserved and most complete of those that survive.

ICOMOS, October 1998



Le port naval de Karlskrona / The naval port of Karlskrona :
Plan indiquant la zone proposée pour inscription et la zone tampon / Map showing nominated property and buffer zone