

## WORLD HERITAGE LIST

### Alcalá de Henares (Spain)

No 876

#### Identification

<i>Nomination</i>	The University and Historic Precinct of Alcalá de Henares
<i>Location</i>	Autonomous Community (Province) of Madrid
<i>State Party</i>	Spain
<i>Date</i>	30 June 1997

#### Justification by State Party

Alcalá de Henares represents a model for integral urban planning designed to create the first university city in Europe. This model included buildings and a layout that are still preserved today, and served as the model for a large number of universities in Europe and the Americas from the beginning of the modern age to the end of the 18th century.

#### Criterion ii

The city bears exceptional and almost unique witness to the cultural tradition of the City of God as a City of Knowledge. It is an instrument for regulating, governing, and administering society in a modern state which exerted great influence on the universities created on its intellectual and legislative model. Many leading members of society of all types were educated at the University, providing an example of the integration of culture across the entire social order.

#### Criterion iii

The buildings of Alcalá de Henares constitute an architectural group that perfectly illustrate the history of architecture. The urban fabric and building typologies of the Jewish and Christian quarters are preserved, providing intact the finest examples of Habsburg architecture.

#### Criterion iv

Alcalá de Henares is directly linked with the scientific and cultural tradition of printing as an instrument of humanism. It saw the production of the Polyglot Bible and of the first grammars and dictionaries of the modern age. These served as models for those of other European languages, and also for native languages of the Americas which have a result survived to the present day. Alcalá set the current standard for the Spanish language.

The city is directly and materially associated with the great cultural and literary tradition of the Spanish Golden Century, and in particular for being the birthplace of the immortal Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, author of *Don Quixote*, an outstanding work of universal significance which has been translated into most known languages.

#### Criterion vi

#### Category of property

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

#### History and Description

##### History

The Henares river valley has been settled by humankind since the Neolithic period. Following the Roman colonization, this strategic site in the centre of the Iberian peninsula inevitably led to the establishment of a Roman town, *Complutum*, some 1.5km from the present-day city centre. It was here that the child saints, Justus and Pastor, were martyred in AD 304, and their tomb outside the walls of the Roman town became a sanctuary round which the present historic centre developed.

It was an episcopal see during the Visigothic period, and became part of the Emirate of Córdoba when the Moors overran most of the Iberian peninsula in the 8th century. The town was relatively insignificant during the Moorish period. A fortress, known as *Al-Qal'at* ("The Castle"), was built during the 12th century some 4km upstream of the Roman town, and a small settlement grew up around it.

After it was recaptured in 1118, the territory of Alcalá was granted to the Archbishopric of Toledo. The city expanded under successive prelates and the medieval fortified settlement took shape. The core was the episcopal precinct, with the Archbishop's Palace at its centre. To the south was the Christian quarter, with its church, the Jewish quarter lay to the east, along the porticoed Calle Mayor, with the Arab quarter to the north. What is now the Plaza de Cervantes was an open area to the eastern edge of the town, the site of annual fairs and tournaments.

During the late 15th century the urban core expanded with the construction outside the walls of the Franciscan Convent of San Diego, which attracted settlement around it. Following an attack by the King of Navarre a new, stronger wall was built to enclose the areas of expansion to the south and east. The town prospered until 1496, when the Jews were expelled from Spain by Royal edict, taking with them their commercial activities. However, the urban fabric remained intact, making possible the creation of a new university city.

This was the brainchild of Cardinal Ximénez de Cisneros, who began by founding the Colegio de San Ildefonso. Unlike other university cities in Europe, such as Bologna, Oxford, Paris, and Salamanca, Alcalá de Henares did not develop slowly, adapting itself to its

urban surroundings. From the start it was conceived by Cisneros as an entity, which took over a partly abandoned medieval town and converted it into a city whose function was solely that of a university. This involved the creation of houses to lodge professors and students and the provision of services such as a sewer system and paved streets. The little Chapel of St Justus was rebuilt as a church and given the title of “Magistral” whereby its canons became Masters (*Magistri*) of the University. More centres of learning were added progressively: there were eventually to be twenty-five *Colegios Menores* (Lesser Colleges), whilst eight large monasteries were also colleges of the University. This model of “university colleges” and “university convents” was to be adopted widely in the New World, as well as elsewhere in Spain.

In the New Privileged Law of 1509 Cisneros created an effective legal framework for his vision. The primary objective of the university was to train administrators for the Church and for the Spanish Empire. The *Complutense Polyglot Bible* (1514-17) illustrates the type of work that began in Alcalá: a masterpiece of typography, it took ten years to complete and established the bases of modern linguistic analysis as well as the accepted structure for dictionaries. This work was supported by that of Antonio de Nebrija, who was the author of the first European grammar of a Romance language (*Gramática de la Lengua Castellana*), published in 1492, which was to be the model for similar grammars in many European and native American languages. The *New Laws of the Indies* were prepared in Alcalá and published there in 1542, the work of the law faculties of the University.

From the mid 17th century, however, saw the number of students, estimated to have been over 12,000 in the 16th century, begin to decline in favour of Madrid., where the Church had begun to establish university colleges and convents on the Alcalá model. This process continued until 1836 when, following the disenfranchisement of church and university properties by Mendizabal, the University was transferred to Madrid, where it survives today under the title of the Complutense University of Madrid.

Alcalá de Henares found itself as a result deprived of its *raison d'être*. The historic buildings of the University, and the urban fabric of the city itself, were at risk, but they were preserved by the actions of the citizens of Alcalá themselves. In a unique act the Society of Joint Owners (*Sociedad de Condueños*) purchased most of the University buildings and preserved them, in some cases unoccupied, to await the return of the University to the city. Others were converted for military use, retaining their principal features intact.

The city began to expand with the arrival of the railway in 1856. It did not develop substantially, however, until the 1960s, when there was heavy domestic immigration from other parts of Spain to what was becoming an industrial centre. Fortunately, this development, largely unplanned and uncontrolled, did not affect the historic centre, still largely owned by the Society of Joint Owners or the army and further protected by being declared an Historic Area in 1968.

Calls for the return of the University began in 1970, when the Madrid institution had begun using “Complutense” in its title. In 1974 that university established a School of Economics in Alcalá. It was not until three years later that the present University of Alcalá de Henares was inaugurated.

In 1985 a covenant was signed for the military buildings to be renovated and restored to their original use, and the seven buildings that comprised the original foundation of Cisneros were handed over by the Society of Joint Owners. Other historic buildings were purchased and integrated into the University or given associated cultural functions.

#### *Description*

The University Precinct begins at the Plaza Cervantes (the former Plaza Mayor) and extends to the east of the medieval city. It was enclosed by demolishing part of the earlier medieval walls and prolonging them round the new urban development. The layout is based on humanist planning principles, with two main axes and a central open space (Plaza de San Diego) on which are the main University buildings.

The walled medieval precinct has the Iglesia Magistral (Cathedral) at its core, from which the street network radiates, merging into the former Jewish and Arab quarters. To the north-west is the ecclesiastical precinct, surrounded by its own walls; at its heart is the Archbishop's Palace.

Within the historic centre proposed for inscription on the World Heritage List there are twenty buildings protected as National Monuments; a further 445 are also protected under the Spanish legislation (see “Legal status” below). Only a few of these will be described in the following text.

The *Universidad y Colegio Mayor de San Ildefonso* is the heart of the university city. It was built in 1537-53 by Rodrigo Gil de Hontañón, one of the greatest masters of the Plateresque style, and is notable for its grand facade, which symbolizes in its elaborate decoration the harmonious conjuncture of the Christian religion, of learning, and of Imperial power.

The *Iglesia Magistral*, as the cathedral of Alcalá is known, is a Gothic structure, completed around 1515. It has a nave and two side aisles, which join to form the ambulatory. The raised chancel is separated from the nave by a superb iron screen, the work of the master, Juan Francés, and beneath it is the crypt of the martyrs, St Justus and St Pastor, over whose tomb the original Romanesque chapel on this site was raised. The complex is completed with an austere cloister and its tower, one of the main features of the silhouette of Alcalá.

The origins of the great complex of the *Archbishop's Palace* date back to the late 14th century, when it had the appearance of a fortress, as can be seen from the Tenorio turret. Its palatial character began with the construction of the brick East Wing, in Gothic-Mudejar style, where the sumptuous Council Room was originally located. The central part, built in stone in the early 16th century, is decorated in Plateresque style. Many Archbishops of Toledo made their own contributions to the ensemble,

one of the most striking being the monumental staircase commissioned by Alonso de Fonseca in 1524.

The *Convento de San Bernardo* (known familiarly as *Monjas Bernardas*) dates from the early 17th century. The side open to public view is austere but the front facade, which includes the monastic church, is ornate, covered with inscriptions relating to the foundation of the monastery. The plan of the interior is oval, surrounded by side chapels and a chancel containing a *baldacchino* on the main axis. It is roofed with a dome on pendentives.

Of the *walls* little remains. However, a number of the gates survive, among them the *Puerta de Burgos* (part of the Monastery of San Bernardo). The *Puerta de San Bernardo* and the *Puerta de Madrid* are monumental structures of the early 17th and 18th centuries respectively built to replace medieval gates.

In the University Precinct the *Patio Trilingue* (Trilingual Courtyard) is one of the main features, at the eastern end of the complex. It originally formed part of the College of San Jerónimo, founded by the Rector, Mateo Pascual Catalan in 1528 for the study of three languages, from which it takes its name. Built between 1564 and 1570, it has four bays with a gallery above; the columns have Ionic capitals supporting basket arches. There is a handsome well in the middle of the courtyard.

The *Paraninfo Universitario* (the auditorium of the University) of 1516-20, the last building to be commissioned by Cisneros, opens on the Trilingual Courtyard. Its interior is a lofty rectangular room with a Mudejar carved ceiling. The upper floor has a gallery of segmental arches. The lecturer's wooden pulpit is in ornate Plateresque style.

The University chapel is the *Capilla de San Ildefonso*, a fine 16th century building in what is known as Cisneros style. Its single nave and slightly raised chancel are covered with a carved wooden Mudejar ceiling. Among its outstanding features are the ornate plasterwork in late Gothic and Plateresque style, the polychrome wood carvings, and the magnificent renaissance tomb of Cardinal Cisneros. It suffered badly from neglect after 1836, but has been restored since 1950.

One of the most impressive architectural groups in Alcalá is that of the Jesuit College and Church. The *Iglesia de Jesuitas* was built between 1602 and 1620. Its monumental facade illustrates the transition from the austere style of Juan de Herrera to Baroque. With its two sections joined by buttresses and surmounted by a pediment with a cross, it is reminiscent of the Gesù in Rome. The adjoining College is in more sober style, noteworthy for its monumental staircase.

Other monuments in this group of National Monuments are the 15th century Hospital de Antezana, the 16th century Convento de Carmelitas de la Imagen and Teatro de Cervantes (Corral de Comedias), and the Ermita de las Doctrinas, Ermita de Santa Lucía, Colegio de Málaga, and Convento de Agustinas, all from the 17th century.

## Management and Protection

### Legal status

The nominated area is fully protected under the provisions of Law No 16/1985 on the Spanish Historic Heritage, and in particular Articles 20 and 21, relating to the protection of historic groups of buildings that have been declared Assets of Cultural Interest.

In addition, there are twenty designated Historic Monuments (see above), 55 Unique Historic Buildings of institutional (university or religious) use, and 390 Historic Residential Buildings, covering in total 80% of the nominated area.

This requires the relevant Autonomous Community to prepare and implement Special Protection Plans in respect of such areas. For Alcalá de Henares this has been prepared by the Madrid Provincial Government and came into force in 1997. The *Plan Especial de Protección del Casco Histórico de Alcalá de Henares* covers every aspect of protection, including the urban layout, public open spaces, property boundaries, and historic buildings.

Three Archaeological Zones are designated under this legislation: the Roman town of *Complutum*, the Roman villas and Visigothic cemeteries of El Val, and the area of the Arab city, with the Neolithic remains. Any work within the historic centre must be preceded by archaeological survey and, where necessary, mitigation by excavation or other means.

The 1991 Master Town Plan for Alcalá de Henares (*Plan General de Ordenación Urbana de Alcalá de Henares*) also contains provisions for safeguarding the historic quality of the city.

Any intervention that affects the historic centre or the protected properties requires authorization by the relevant City and Provincial authorities.

### Management

Ownership of the properties that make up the nominated area is spread between national, regional, municipal, and church administrations and private individuals and institutions.

Various forms of regulation and control apply, which are set out in the preceding section. Evaluation of projects for conservation, restoration, development, etc is the responsibility of the City Council (Office of Works and Development) and the Administration of the Province of Madrid (Directorate General for Cultural Heritage, Directorate General for Architecture and Housing).

Also associated with this work are the Technical Services Department of the University of Alcalá de Henares, and the Spanish Institute of Architecture.

The two Plans referred to above, plus the Special Plans for the Edge of the Historic Centre of 1986 and 1990, provide for a buffer zone, which is under dual administrative control by the City Council and the Madrid Provincial Government. Strict control is exercised over building and other projects which may have an adverse impact on the historic centre and its environment.

## Conservation and Authenticity

### *Conservation history*

Following the transfer of the University in 1836, a number of historic buildings were demolished and replaced despite the efforts of local conservationists. There was also a general modernizing of the interiors and exteriors of many of the surviving early structures. As a result, nearly than 70% of the residential buildings in the historic centre are of 19th or early 20th century date.

During the Civil War a number of important historic buildings suffered damage and partial destruction. It is frankly admitted in the nomination dossier that “the most negative actions took place during the 1960s and 1970s, when Municipal ordinances permitted the offsetting or changing of alignments of buildings in order to increase their height.”

It was not until after the historic centre had been designated as an Historic Group of Buildings by the General Directorate of Fine Arts in 1968 that the situation began to change. The historic centre had begun to decay as the inhabitants moved out.

The key event that brought about a change in the situation was the Covenant of 1985 between the University, the City Council, the Madrid Provincial Government, and the Regional Government of Castilla-La Mancha. This created the legal framework for the formidable task of restoring the military barracks and judicial buildings in the University precinct to their original functions.

Since that time more than 150,000m<sup>2</sup> of university buildings have been rehabilitated and restored, along with fifteen religious buildings. Work has also been carried out on many private residences, covering 150,000m<sup>2</sup>. This work has been recognized with awards from Europa Nostra, the European Commission, and the Council of Europe.

### *Authenticity*

In spite of the many vicissitudes that it has undergone in the past 160 years - abandonment by the University, military occupation of some major buildings, Civil War, and municipal insensitivity - Alcalá de Henares has retained a substantial degree of authenticity in its urban fabric and in many of its historic buildings. It has, unusually, also recovered its authenticity of function after a century and a half.

## Evaluation

### *Action by ICOMOS*

An ICOMOS mission visited Alcalá de Henares in January 1998. ICOMOS also consulted its International Scientific Committee on Historic Towns and Villages.

### *Qualities*

Despite its chequered history, Alcalá de Henares has retained, or recaptured, much of the special character due to its history, and in particular the foundation there of the first university city, the precursor of and model for many subsequent foundations, in particular in the New World.

Its significance transcends its role as a model for universities, however, since it was the embodiment of the *Civitas Dei*, the ideal urban community, which was taken by Spanish missionaries to the Americas, where it established the framework for the urbanization of the New World.

Of comparable importance was the intellectual contribution of Alcalá de Henares, since it was here that modern approaches to grammar and lexicography were formulated, and also where the Spanish language, one of the most widely spoken languages of the world today, was given its definitive grammatical structure.

Finally, Alcalá de Henares was the birthplace of one of the giants of world literature, Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, author of the immortal *Don Quixote*.

### *Comparative analysis*

Alcalá de Henares was not the first university to be founded - that distinction probably belongs to Salerno - nor the first in Spain, which was created in Salamanca in the 13th century. It was, however, the first deliberately planned university town, with the layout expressly designed to meet the requirements of learning and scholarship. In this it is set apart from the other early universities, such as Bologna, Oxford, Cambridge, or the Sorbonne, which developed within and adapted themselves to the constraints imposed by existing, well established urban settlements.

### *ICOMOS recommendations for future action*

During the ICOMOS expert mission, certain proposals were made for the modification of the buffer zone. These were accepted by the Spanish authorities and revised maps and specifications were provided which fully meet the requirements of ICOMOS

## Brief description

Alcalá de Henares is the first planned university city in the world, founded by Cardinal Ximénez de Cisneros in the early 16th century. It was the model for the *Civitas Dei* (City of God), the ideal urban community, which was taken by Spanish missionaries to the Americas, and also for universities in Europe and beyond.

## Recommendation

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

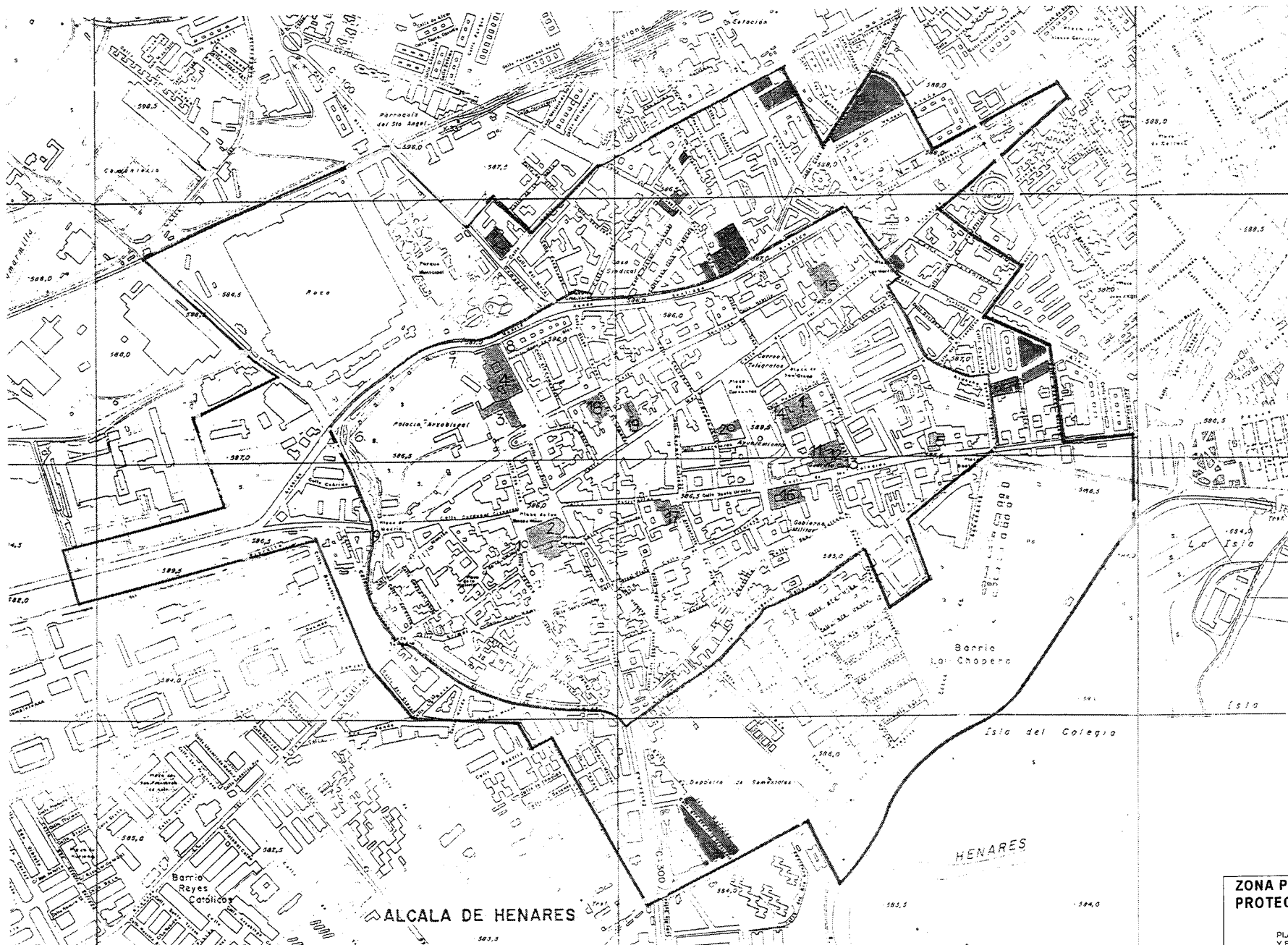
**Criterion ii:** Alcalá de Henares was the first city to be designed and built solely as the seat of a university, and was to serve as the model for other centres of learning in Europe and the Americas.

**Criterion iv:** The concept of the ideal city, the City of God (*Civitas Dei*), was first given material expression in Alcalá de Henares, from where it was widely diffused throughout the world.

**Criterion vi:** The contribution of Alcalá de Henares to the intellectual development of humankind finds expression in its materialization of the *Civitas Dei*, in the

advances in linguistics that took place there, not least in the definition of the Spanish language, and through the work of its great son, Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra and his masterpiece, *Don Quixote*.

ICOMOS, October 1998



**MONUMENTOS NACIONALES**

1. UNIVERSIDAD - COLEGIO MAYOR DE SAN ILDEFONSO
2. IGLESIA MAGISTRAL
3. PALACIO ARZOBISPAL
4. CONVENTO DE SAN BERNARDO
5. ERMITA DE LOS DOCTRINOS
6. MURALLAS
7. PUERTA DE BURGOS
8. PUERTA DE SAN BERNARDO
9. PUERTA DE MADRID
10. ERMITA DE SANTA LUCIA

**EDIFICIOS DE PROTECCION INTEGRAL**

11. PARAMINIO DE LA UNIVERSIDAD
12. PATIO TRILINGUE
13. COLEGIO DE SAN JERONIMO
14. CAPILLA DE SAN ILDEFONSO
15. IGLESIA DE JESUITAS
16. COLEGIO DE MALAGA
17. CONVENTO DE AGUSTINAS
18. CONVENTO DE CARMELITAS DE LA IMAGEN
19. HOSPITAL DE ANTEZANA
20. TEATRO CERVANTES - CORRAL DE COMEDIAS

**ZONA PROPUESTA Y ZONA DE PROTECCIÓN**

PLANO DE LA CIUDAD CON DELIMITACIONES Y EDIFICACION MONUMENTAL