



# Executive Summary

## State Party

Republic of Latvia

## State, Province or Region

Kurzeme (Courland) region, Kuldīga Municipality

## Name of Property

*Kuldīga / Goldingen in Courland*

## Geographical coordinates to the nearest second

56°58'03.9"N 21°58'17.5"E

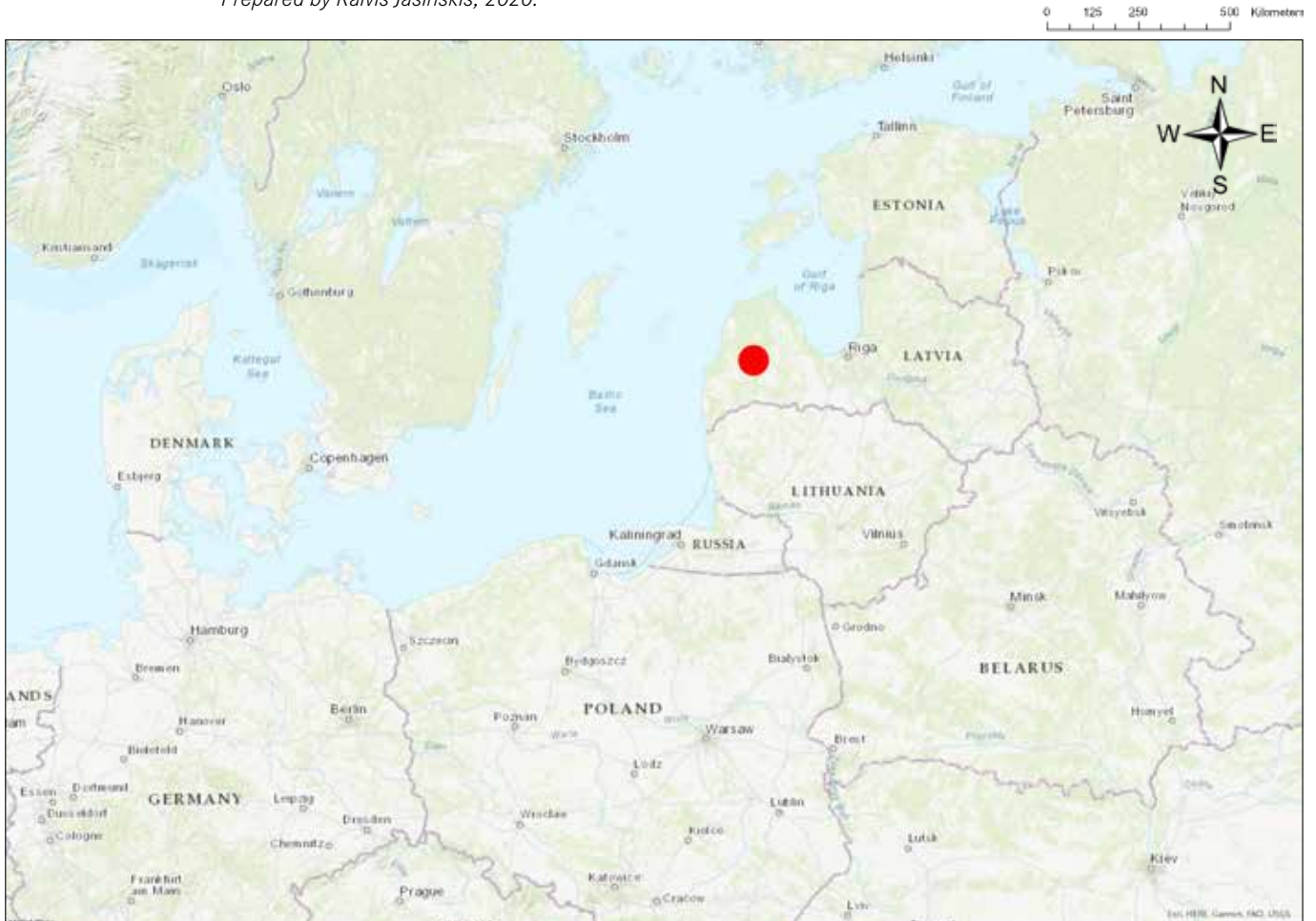
## Textual description of the boundary(ies) of the nominated property


The property boundary of the proposed World Heritage site *Kuldīga / Goldingen in Courland* is described clockwise, starting from the north-eastern most point of the proposed nominated property. This point is located on the right bank of the Venta River and gives a panoramic view of Kuldīga with the church tower of Saint Catherine's Lutheran Church in the centre as well as the river itself. The modern entrance to the town next to where the castle mill was located in ducal times can be seen. From this point the castle would have been visible when it was still standing. The boundary follows the terrain of the area and the territory that lies outside of the boundary can be clearly distinguished by a rise in altitude. For visitors, when walking south along the boundary, a path facilitates walking parallel to the line drawn by the natural terrain of the area. This path lies approximately ten metres inside the property boundary. While approaching the modern entrance to the town over the brick bridge built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the panorama integrates the Ventas Rumba waterfall which can be seen through the arches of the bridge as well as the waterfall at the position of the old mill, where the Alekšupīte flows into the Venta. At the bridge, the boundary crosses the street that enters the old town in a diagonal line and continues along the right bank of the river. It follows down some stairs and again follows the natural division of altitudes, going around Duke Jacob's Channel. The remaining part of the boundary on the eastern bank of the Venta continues along the relief and it is no longer possible for visitors to walk along it as it goes through a nature area. Behind where Duke Jacob's Channel is connected to the Venta, the boundary crosses over to the river's left bank. On the opposite bank the boundary follows the riverbed for some metres and then connects up the hill to a point where two walking paths connect. From there, it follows the terrain down to Dīķu Street, turning west and going along the ancient castle moat which still features water elements today and reminds us of its original function. After following the old castle garden, the boundary turns south into Rumbas Street, one of the oldest streets of Kuldīga, including only the street itself and the buildings on the western side of the street. The boundary follows along the eastern sidewalk of the street up to 11 Rumbas Street,

where it cuts around the building, back up to Rumbas Street. The boundary then turns east along the wall between houses number 9 and 7. All the houses of Rumbas Street south of number 7 lie within the nominated property. The boundary follows along the plot lines of the remaining buildings of Rumbas Street, including the backyards into the territory. It goes along private green spaces belonging to the buildings on Jelgavas Street, up until a wooden panelled fence which belongs to buildings standing on Jelgavas Street and follows this fence until it meets the street. It connects back to the road on Jelgavas Street, with number 26 being the last house within the property. The boundary is clearly distinguishable by the aforementioned wooden fence. The boundary crosses the street and follows along the outline of the green space on the corner between Jelgavas and Skrundas Streets. From the park, it follows along the plot lines of the buildings on Skrundas Street up until building number 16 where it links back to the street and changes the side of the road, including the plots of number 17 and 15. Behind building number 13, the boundary connects to Ziedu Street, along some private properties. On Ziedu Street, building number 4 is included in the property, whereas the buildings starting with number 6 lie outside of the World Heritage property. Opposite 2 Ziedu Street, the boundary crosses the street and then cuts along the plot lines of the building standing on 1 Ziedu Street, as well as those on Skrundas and Jelgavas Streets. The boundary follows along the properties' shared borders with Leona Paegles parks (park). When it meets Leona Paegles Street, the boundary crosses the street opposite the brick building with the high chimney and goes along the buildings up until building number 9. Behind this building, the boundary turns toward Alekšupīte River, follows it up until the little waterfall beneath the bridge of Dzirnavu Street and comes back along the river bank on the opposite side. It follows the Alekšupīte and goes up between the red building that is St. Anne's parish house and Saint Anne's Church, the church lying outside the property boundary. The boundary connects up to Mucenieku Street and around 10 Dzirnavu Street, across the street, around 7 Dzirnavu Street and then north along the sidewalk of Dzirnavu Street in direction toward the centre. Behind building number 3 it goes along the plot lines of Dzirnavu Street, turning west along the plot lines of the buildings standing on Liepājas Street. The boundary comes up between 18 and 20 Liepājas Street (18 being inside and 20 being outside of the property) and crosses diagonally back to 17 Liepājas Street. From there, it follows along the wooden fence next to the water tower, crosses Torņa Street and comes straight up onto Smilšu Street. At Smilšu Street, the boundary turns east, including only the street, not the buildings on the other side. The boundary goes behind the first building on the corner of Smilšu Street and Street of 1905. It continues along all of the buildings in Street of 1905 and their plots. From Street of 1905, the boundary moves towards Pētera Street where it includes both sides of the street up until houses number 6 and 3. Behind 3 Pētera Street the boundary continues towards the park and follows along the fences that divide the park from the bordering plots. Behind the playgrounds the boundary crosses into the park, across the path, along the fences and excluding the sports devices on the next corner, along the plot lines of the buildings belonging to Ventspils Street. It then again crosses a path in the park and goes around the territory of 4 Grants Street. Here, it crosses the street and continues around the corner building, crossing the street again and going through the yard of 37 Ventspils Street, where it connects to Virkas Street. 1 Virkas Street is the northernmost building included in the nominated property. From this point, the boundary follows the plot lines of the two front buildings of Virkas Street and continues along all of the buildings and backyards of Ventspils Street up until the factory that lies behind these buildings. The boundary follows Ventspils Street until the intersection with Kaļķu Street, where it crosses the street, including the territory of the corner building and then follows along the plot lines down to the river. Behind 3 Ventspils Street, the closest building to the river, the boundary turns north for approximately two hundred metres up to the point that lies directly opposite the starting point of the boundary description. The boundary crosses the river in a straight line back to this point.

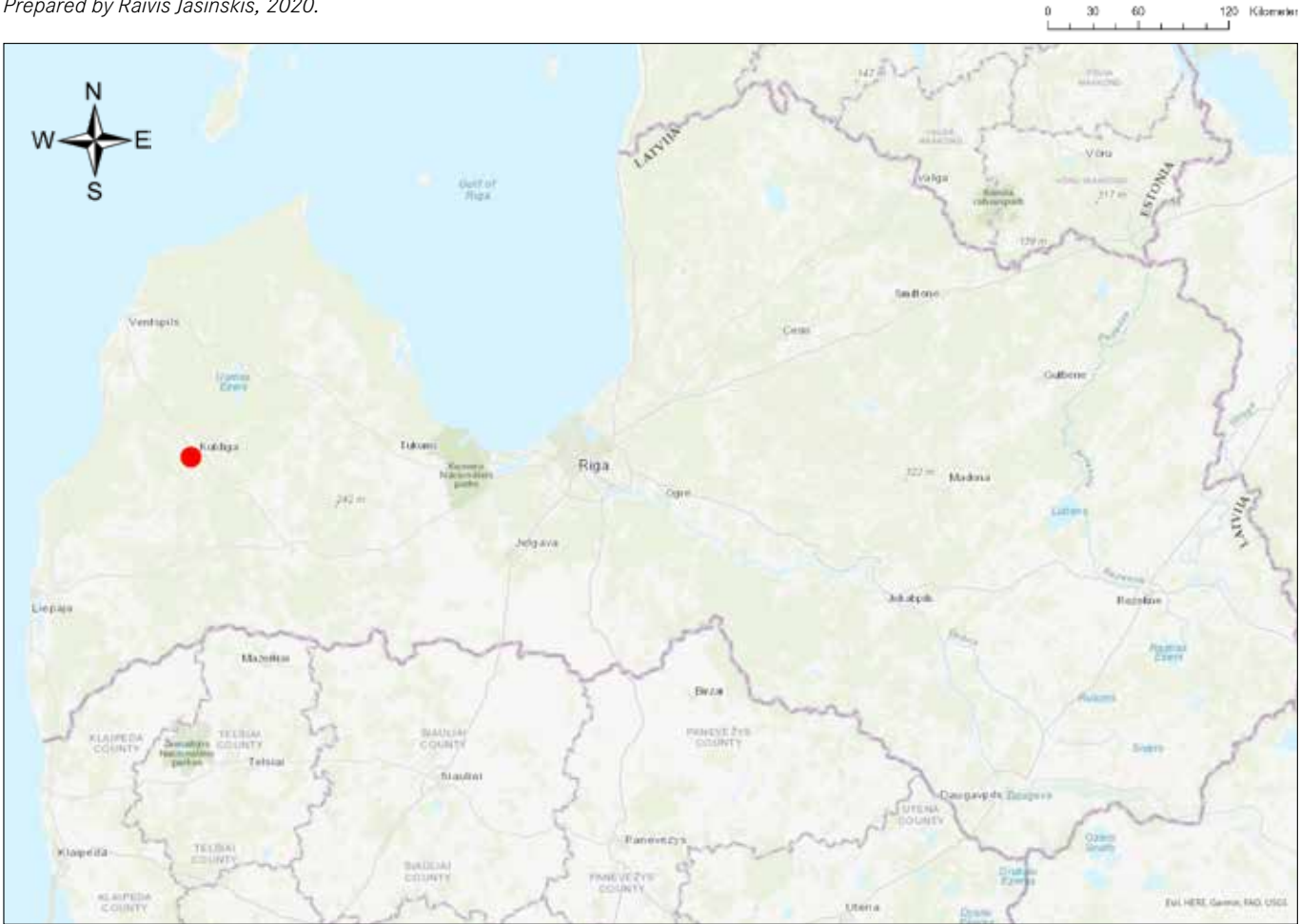
## Maps of the nominated property, showing boundaries and buffer zone


**Figure 3.** Location of the nominated site in Europe / in the Baltics.  
*Prepared by Raivis Jasinskis, 2020.*



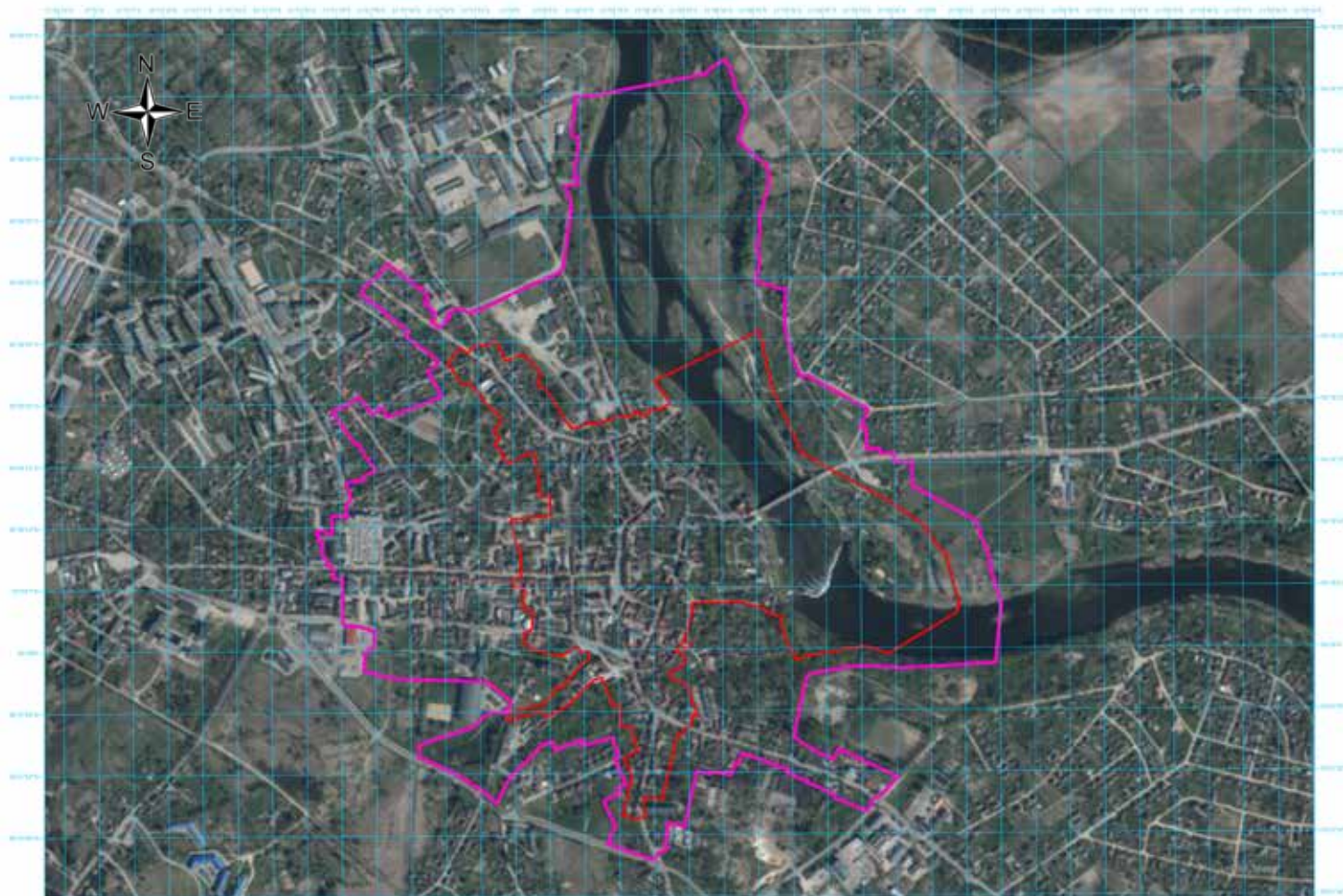
 Location of the nominated site in Europe / in the Baltics



**Figure 4.** Location of the nominated site in Latvia.  
*Prepared by Raivis Jasinskis, 2020.*



 Location of the nominated site Latvia

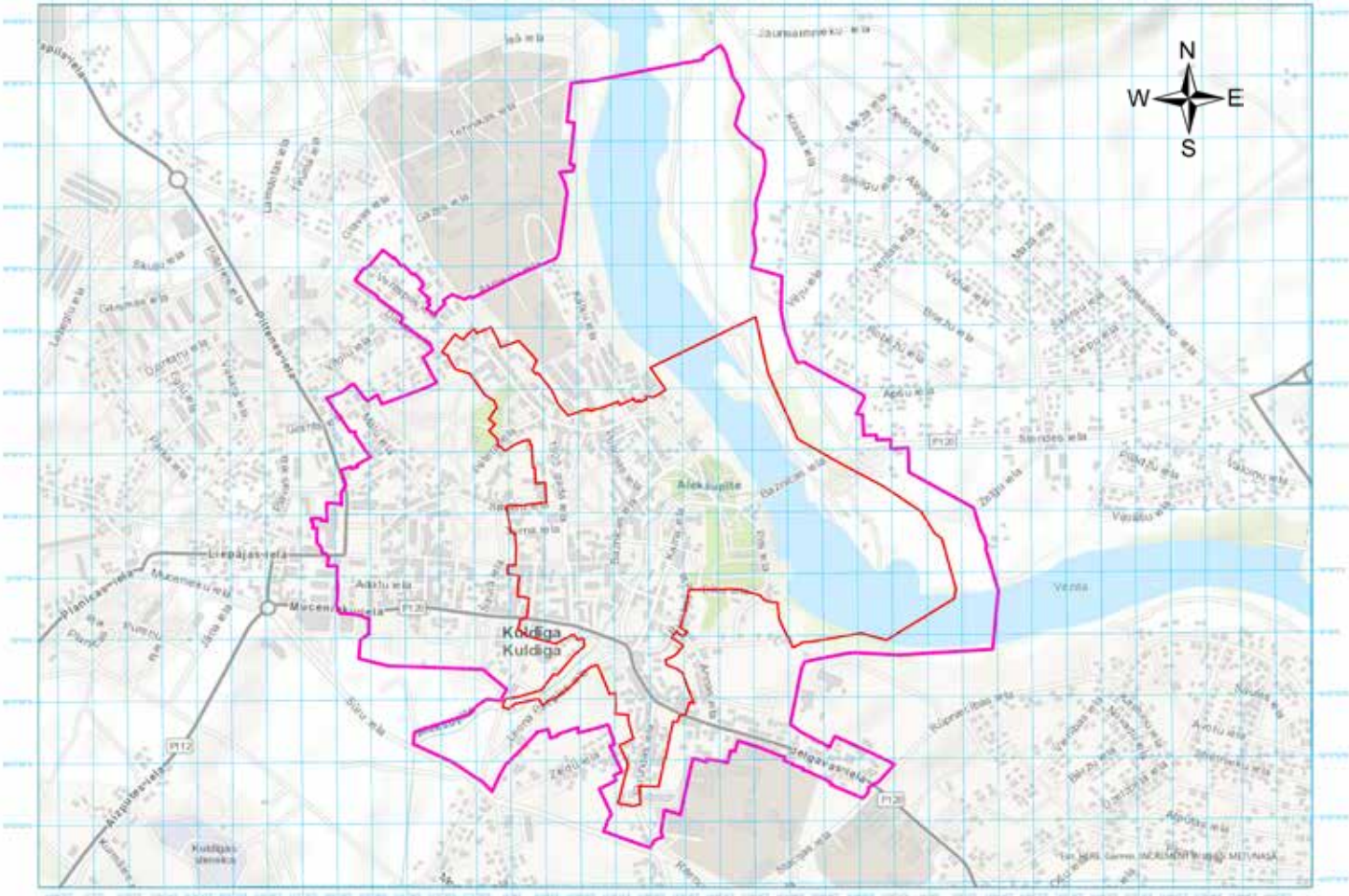
**Figure 5.** The territory of the nominated property and its buffer zone (base of an orto photograph).  
*Prepared by Raivis Jasinskis, 2020.*



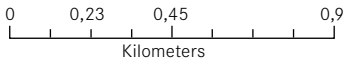
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-  border of the buffer zone of the property nominated for UNESCO heritage recognition
  -  border of the property nominated for UNESCO heritage recognition
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0 0,23 0,45 0,9  
Kilometers

**Figure 6.** The territory of the nominated property and its buffer zone.  
 Prepared by Raivis Jasinskis, 2020.



- border of the buffer zone of the property nominated for UNESCO heritage recognition
- border of the property nominated for UNESCO heritage recognition



## Criteria under which the property is nominated

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*(iii) to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared*

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## Draft Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

### Brief synthesis

The town of Kuldīga is located in the western part of Latvia at the confluence of the River Venta and the smaller stream Alekšupīte in central Kurzeme (Courland) Region, about 150 km west of Rīga. Kuldīga's historic core is an exceptionally well-preserved and compelling reminder of the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia's era of growth and exchange in the late 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, when the town was known by the name Goldingen. Following the Duchy's establishment by Gotthart Kettler in 1561, Kuldīga was the primary residence and administrative centre of Courland. Kuldīga maintained an important role in the administration of the Duchy, which governed a significant part of the Baltics between 1561 and 1795.

The characteristics of its urban and architectural development in the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries remain clearly distinguishable in the streetscape of Kuldīga's historic core. The combination of a well-preserved urban layout, authentic building structures and facades, original materials, and landscape elements that continue to illustrate the historic townscape of Kuldīga, comprise tangible attributes directly linked to the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia. The Outstanding Universal Value of Kuldīga is expressed through Kuldīga's ability to provide the most complete urban and architectural testimony of the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia which, despite its small size and problematic position among the larger European powers Poland-Lithuania, Sweden and Russia, developed into a maritime power in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and established an international trade network that spanned from Europe to the African west coast and the Americas.

The most essential attributes of the Duchy's testimony can be grouped into four main categories: (i) the urban layout and streetscape which depict the spatial relations of urban aspects at the time, (ii) architectural remains of residential, public and religious buildings which illustrate the regional development and composition of architecture and townscapes in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, (iii) the expression of specific craft skills that have been passed down from generation to generation and which continue to be used in the contemporary conservation of Kuldīga, and (iv) landscape elements which preserve fully the historical townscape and continue to stimulate the identification of locals with the property.

### Justification for Criteria

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*Criterion (iii) to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared*

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*Kuldīga / Goldingen in Courland* bears a unique testimony to the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia and its era of growth, international trade and cultural exchange, as both its first ducal residence and essential administrative centre. The old town of Kuldīga (Goldingen) is the best-preserved



and last remaining urban testimony displaying a street and plot layout with significant physical remains of architectural fabric and infrastructure dating back to the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia. As one of the smallest European entities which participated in the common economic activities of the dominant political powers, Courland and its major urban centre Kuldīga are compelling reminders of late 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century trade between the Baltics and beyond.

The historic centre of Kuldīga bears tangible evidence of the life of a small state asserting itself among much larger powers on the international stage of the time. With much of its pre-19<sup>th</sup> century architectural fabric and a vast majority of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century urban and landscape elements preserved, Kuldīga is the best and last remaining urban testimony of the era of the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia. In light of this special role, Kuldīga furthermore provides vivid testimony to the Courland trade and craft exchanges, cross-cultural encounters and tangible as well as intangible cultural heritage traditions. It gives tangible evidence of the long-lasting impact of the development of the architectural and crafts language of the region influenced by international exchange. The craft skills that developed in the ducal era are perceptible in functional and ornamental building details throughout the town and continue to be recognized, used and celebrated by local residents today. Kuldīga is the last remaining urban reminder of a space which developed under the fostering political development and trade activities of the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia, which shaped this region for over two centuries. It is the only urban testimony able to illustrate the narrative of this specific period of time and to conserve its significance for future generations.

### **Statement of integrity**

The property boundaries of *Kuldīga / Goldingen in Courland* encompass all elements necessary for the narrative conveyance of the urban expansion of the remarkable stage of political development in the Baltic states embodied by the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia. The old town of Kuldīga integrates the medieval castle mound plateau and the medieval village Kalnamiests into a larger urban fabric created during the influential ducal period from the 16<sup>th</sup> until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and later expanded, mostly outside the historic centre, in the 19<sup>th</sup> and furthermore the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The proposed area covers the pre-19<sup>th</sup> century urban expansion and its significant environmental setting. The property is preserved mostly in its condition of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century and therefore includes the complete historic testimony of Courland retained until present, particularly legible in the unchanged urban layout, composition of urban volumes, architectural testimony and cityscape.

Although significant fires destroyed parts of Kuldīga on various occasions in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, residential dwellings were re-erected and most of Kuldīga's architectural remains, which continue to provide testimony to Kuldīga's role as a major urban centre of the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia, originated in these productive periods. Later abandonment of houses following the Great Plague as well as individual fire and flood events necessitated the construction of a number of late 18<sup>th</sup> and subsequently 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings, which retain the shape, volume, style and decorative forms of the earlier structures. Unlike most other Courland towns, Kuldīga survived the great wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century largely unscathed and modernist urban developments were largely implemented far outside its historic centre, ensuring both integrity and authenticity of the townscape.

Due to the rigorous legal protection of the historic city and the well-managed urban conservation zone, the property is largely free of threats that could be considered to affect the old town negatively in the future.

### **Statement of authenticity for properties nominated under criteria (i) to (vi)**

Kuldīga's urban and architectural heritage is well preserved in terms of material, design and in many cases craftsmanship. It illustrates continuity in function and use as residences, auxiliary structures and religious spaces for the resident community. The old town further preserved its authenticity in setting and location, having preserved not only its urban layout and volume but also its environment in terms of the wider cityscape, in particular, when viewed from the opposite banks of the Venta River. Traditional lighting concepts and traffic regulations contribute to the authentic atmosphere in the historic centre.

Kuldīga's residents are knowledgeable and proud of their history and the heritage of the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia and are eager to transmit it to future generations. They actively continue individual craft traditions dating back to ducal times and engage in the maintenance of both the town's built heritage and its intangible cultural heritage, including by seeking international recognition of Kuldīga's heritage at various levels.

Consistent state protection since 1969 and a stringently managed urban conservation zone preserved by means of an urban conservation plan, integrating a programmed approach to conservation and maintenance work, preserved the historic fabric that was largely unaffected by historical crises and continues to produce conservation results of the highest international standards. The Kuldīga Restoration Centre, officially established in 2010, has become a strong community support towards the adequate preservation of private properties and acts as an ambassador for the continuation of the craft traditions of the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia. The European Heritage Label awarded to Kuldīga in 2008 specifically recognized the highest standards of authenticity in the old town of Kuldīga and its wider setting. It can therefore be affirmed that Kuldīga preserves authenticity at the highest level.

### **Requirements for protection and management**

The management of the site *Kuldīga / Goldingen in Courland* is subject to Kuldīga Municipality. The management team consists of diverse specialists, including architects, town planners, restoration specialists and professionals of the district museum. The day-to-day management of the World Heritage property will be guided by a Management Plan which was designed in 2020, based on the results of a stakeholder workshop with local and national participants, such as residents, architects, municipal specialists, as well as representatives from the Latvian National Commission for UNESCO, National Heritage Board, Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The property was first nationally recognised in 1969 and received the highest level of national protection as a cultural monument under the national Law *On Protection of Cultural Monuments*. The landscape elements of the Venta Valley have been protected since 1957 and were recognized as part of the NATURA 2000 network, which acknowledges landscapes of European importance, in 2004. On a local level, multiple planning documents, such as a local territorial development plan, define strict legal mechanisms that protect the status quo of the urban heritage and further prevent the development of harmful economic activities that might diminish the property's value. The legal protection in place has proven to be extremely effective.

With regard to the conservation of the built heritage, the Kuldīga Restoration Centre is an essential partner of the municipality. The director as well as the employed restoration specialists act as contacts for all stakeholders and can be directly addressed by the municipality, architects and residents alike. The Centre's expertise in addition to its network to other specialists make for a valuable asset for the protection and management of the carriers of Outstanding Universal Value.

As a result of effective legal protection and a responsible management system, no significant threats currently exist. However, a risk analysis and vulnerability assessment were performed in 2020 to identify potential threats and to develop action strategies to counteract them. As the property encompasses a town centre that may experience development pressures, strategies preventing any negative impacts arising from such developments are one of the priorities of management. It is furthermore essential to create awareness of the threat deriving from potential negative changes to the management structures.

## **Name and contact information of official local institution/agency**

### **Organization**

Kuldīga Municipality

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