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## Colonies of Benevolence (Belgium/Netherlands) No 1555rev

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### Official name as proposed by the States Parties

Colonies of Benevolence

### Location

Drenthe and Fryslân provinces

Netherlands

Antwerp province

Flemish Region

Belgium

### Brief description

Beginning in 1818, the Society of Benevolence founded agricultural colonies in rural areas of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. The aim was to create an alternative to the living conditions of the urban poor. By moving this population to the countryside, the cities would be relieved of a major social problem and poor families would be given the opportunity to build up a beneficial and industrious life in the country. The colonies were created out of heath and peatland, and featured orthogonal roads, ribbons of houses and small farms, and communal buildings. From 1819 onwards, 'unfree' colonies were also founded, the last in 1825; these featured large institutions and larger farms again set in an orthogonal pattern of fields and avenues, and housed particular groups of disadvantaged people with support from the State. At their peak some 18,000 people lived in the colonies, including those within the nominated property.

The colonies were an Enlightenment experiment in social reform which demonstrated an innovative, highly influential model of pauper relief and of settler colonialism – the agricultural domestic colony. After 1918, the colonies lost their relevance and evolved into 'normal' villages and areas with institutions for custodial care.

Four former colonies in three component parts have been nominated: the free colonies of Frederiksoord and Wilhelminaoord, the colony of Wortel which was a free colony that evolved into an unfree colony, and the unfree colony of Veenhuizen.

### Category of property

In terms of categories of cultural property set out in Article I of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a trans-national serial nomination of 3 *sites*.

In terms of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (July 2019) paragraph 47, it has also been nominated as a *cultural landscape*.

## 1 Basic data

### Included in the Tentative List

1 December 2015

### Background

This is a referred back nomination. At its 42<sup>nd</sup> session, the World Heritage Committee examined the first nomination and took the following decision:

Decision: 42 COM 8B.25:

*The World Heritage Committee,*

1. Having examined Documents WHC/18/42.COM/8B and WHC/18/42.COM/INF.8B1,
2. Refers the nomination of the Colonies of Benevolence, Belgium and Netherlands, back to the States Parties, in order to:
  - a) Adapt the nomination by focusing on the well-preserved cultural landscapes of the free and unfree Colonies, both understood to reflect the ideals relating to a single utopian model of poverty reduction that guided their foundation and evolution,
  - b) Ensure that the nominated free and unfree Colonies reflect the scope and careful planning of the agricultural settlements and their ordered buildings and how these were integrated as a whole and offered an approach to the idea of improvement of individual over 150 years,
  - c) Adapt the Management Plan so that it aims to evoke, through adequate protection and through careful management and presentation, both the positive and the negative approaches of these colonies, their overall organisation, and the lives of their inhabitants;
3. Recommends the States Parties to consider inviting an ICOMOS advisory mission to the component sites, if needed;
4. Also recommends that the States Parties give consideration to the following:
  - a) Provide a better rationale for the delineation of buffer zones,
  - b) Provide detailed information on how the whole landscape of the colonies is protected,
  - c) Complete the monitoring system to include indicators related to the attributes of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value.

As recommended by the World Heritage Committee, discussions between ICOMOS and the States Parties commenced in September 2018, and an ICOMOS Advisory Mission took place from 14 to 17 May 2019. The report of the ICOMOS Advisory process was finalised in July 2019.

In order to address the requirements of the World Heritage Committee, the ICOMOS Advisory process focused engagement with the States Parties on the following objectives:

- Explore more fully:
  - The broader socio-historical context of the Colonies in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe, and the precise motivations of the key players who promoted the Colonies of Benevolence;
  - The role of each of the free and unfree Colonies as part of the same innovative model to reduce poverty;
  - The original intentions of the founders; whether the Colonies were deliberately planned or arose from a pragmatic approach; how, with focus on the landscape, the innovative messages of the experiment were materialized and were transmitted.
- Consider whether a re-conceptualized nomination might be able to demonstrate and provide a convincing justification of Outstanding Universal Value and what might be the supporting attributes if potential for Outstanding Universal Value is identified.
- If potential for Outstanding Universal Value is identified:
  - Discuss integrity and authenticity related to the inventory of tangible attributes that convey the potential Outstanding Universal Value on the basis of what still remains on the ground to reflect the implementation of the original ideas.
  - Explore and discuss the selection of potential component sites to be included in any revised nomination;
  - Discuss, once the potential component sites have been identified, their boundaries and buffer zones.

#### **Consultations**

ICOMOS has consulted several independent experts.

#### **Technical Evaluation Mission**

An ICOMOS technical evaluation mission visited the property from 2 to 5 October 2017.

#### **Additional information received by ICOMOS**

ICOMOS sent a letter to the States Parties on 29 September 2017 requesting information on the planning and evolution of each of the colonies of the nominated property and an augmented comparative analysis considering other responses to the social dislocation of the period whether caused by the Napoleonic Wars or the Industrial Revolution. On 2 November 2017, the States Parties sent a response including text and maps. The additional information has been incorporated into the relevant sections below.

On 22 December 2017, ICOMOS sent to the States Parties an Interim Report requesting additional information regarding the approach for the nomination, on the integrity of the components and on the comparative analysis.

A response from the States Parties was sent on 27 February 2018. The additional information has been incorporated into the relevant sections below.

A revised nomination dossier was submitted for evaluation in January 2020.

In addition, the issue of possible buffer zones was the subject of further discussions after completion of the Advisory process report. The States Parties provided additional information on 28 February 2020 seeking to reinforce the justification of its decision not to identify buffer zones for the nominated property.

#### **Date of ICOMOS approval of this report**

12 March 2020

## **2 Description of the property**

### **Description**

The original nomination comprised seven colonies. The current referred back nomination has been reduced to four colonies.

The four colonies are located in rural areas of the Netherlands (three colonies) and Belgium (one colony). There were initially two types of colony, free and unfree, and the overall pattern of the colonies depended on this status of their residents. Free colonies featured long ribbons of houses and small farms set in a pattern of orthogonal roads and fields. Unfree colonies had larger building complexes providing essential functions for the colony, housing their residents and staff. Farms in the unfree colonies were larger, also set in an orthogonally organised landscape of avenues and fields. Three initially free colonies and one unfree colony have been nominated. One of the free colonies also evolved into an unfree colony, representing a hybrid.

Features of the landscapes include their orthogonal structure with avenues, avenue plantings, other plantings, meadows, fields and forests, and with the characteristic houses, farms, institutions, churches, schools and industrial buildings.

The two free colonies, Frederiksoord and Wilhelminaoord, do not survive in their entirety. The only remaining original houses in the free colonies are at Frederiksoord and Wilhelminaoord. Farm buildings were improved in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century in all colonies. At Willemsoord the church (1851) and rectory remain from the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Some original buildings survive at the unfree colony of Veenhuizen, together with mid-19<sup>th</sup> century buildings; while at Wortel, founded as a free colony and re-organised as an unfree colony, buildings from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century remain. The original layout of Veenhuizen has been obscured by a modern village (excluded from the nominated property). Perhaps the greatest change at these colonies was brought about in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century by the use of institutional buildings as active prisons at Wortel and Veenhuizen, particularly from the fences, walls, guard towers and new ancillary buildings that have been constructed.

The four individual colonies are separately described further below.

#### *Free Colonies*

##### 1. Frederiksoord, the Netherlands

This colony, combined with Wilhelminaoord as a single component, covers 555 hectares. The original headquarters of the Society of Benevolence are located here, as is the house of its founder Johannes van den Bosch. Some original colonists' houses remain laid out in ribbon patterns, together with staff housing. The farm buildings date from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, as do the layout of the farms. An area with small and medium sized buildings exists in the core of this original colony but this is excluded from the nominated property.

##### 2. Wilhelminaoord, the Netherlands

This colony has long ribbon avenues creating an irregular shape. Several original colonists' houses, churches and other common buildings remain. The farm complexes date from the middle 19<sup>th</sup> century and onward. One large complex of buildings at the southeast end of the colony has been excluded, along with two smaller areas to the northwest.

#### *Free Colony that evolved into an Unfree Colony (Hybrid)*

##### 3. Wortel, Belgium

This colony is 550 hectares in area. The layout of roads and fields dates to the founding of the colony, but the oldest structures are from the Belgian building programme that started in 1870, when Wortel was adapted from a free Colony into an unfree Colony. Structures for one farm and staff houses remain as does a large colony institution which is now an active prison. The core of this colony is surrounded by farm fields and the outer edges of the colony are largely forested. The northeast portion of Wortel is now a nature reserve and it has an avenue grid like the rest of the colony. A cemetery is in the northern part of the colony.

#### *Unfree Colony*

##### 4. Veenhuizen, the Netherlands

The largest of the colony sites, it covers 907 hectares. Some buildings from the founding period are present, as are many late 19<sup>th</sup> century institutional structures and extensive staff housing. Some of the former ensembles of communal buildings are now noted on the maps provided by the States Parties as areas of

archaeological value. A modern village exists in the south-central part of the colony (excluded from the nominated property). An active prison is present, occupying one of the colony's buildings, as is a prison museum. Areas of forest exist today at the north and south edges of this colony.

The revised nominated property is presented by the States Parties as reflecting the best-preserved cultural landscapes of the free and unfree Colonies.

#### **History and development**

The United Kingdom of the Netherlands (today the countries of the Netherlands and Belgium) came out of the Napoleonic wars as a newly united country with a weakened economy and a pressing social problem of increased poverty. The Society of Benevolence was formed as a voluntary association to address poverty on a national scale. This social experiment created colonies that aimed to bring heathland and rough ground under cultivation by poor people, who would earn their living through working the land. The two-fold inspiration was the Dutch tradition of reclaiming land and ideas derived from the Enlightenment – people's lives were not dictated by providence, but with training and guidance could be changed for the better.

The first colony, Frederiksoord was formed in 1818 on land purchased on the margins of the province of Drenthe. Fifty-three houses and small farm lots were laid out in a regular pattern along with some communal buildings. Families would learn to work their land with guidance and eventually become self-sufficient. More land nearby was purchased and more colonies were formed in quick succession, including Wilhelminaoord.

Problems soon arose, the farm plots were too small to provide for the families, and manure for fertilizer had to be imported. Later colonies had larger family plots, although they never achieved the goal of self-sufficiency and the colonies had to rely on aid from the State.

The Society of Benevolence sought other sources of revenue to support its activities. It contracted with the State to settle orphans in a colony, soon followed by another for beggars and vagrants. This led to the creation of the unfree colonies, including Veenhuizen, with large dormitory type structures to house the colonists and larger centralized farms for them to work under the supervision of guards.

In 1821, a second branch of the Society was formed in the southern provinces of the kingdom. The following year, work began on the free colony of Wortel, arranged in similar fashion as the free colonies in the north, with small farm plots and houses ranged in lines around a central intersection with a spinning hall, a school/church, the director's house and a warehouse.

By 1827, the Society of Benevolence owned over 7,000 ha of land, with 2,700 ha under cultivation. Together, the colonies had 6,744 residents living in 500 buildings. There were, however, a number of problems that quickly emerged. Many of the colonists were not physically fit enough to farm. Harvests were often poor, and there was a lack of fertilizer so that manure had to be imported from elsewhere. Belgium separated from the Netherlands in 1830 and the southern Society found it difficult to raise enough money to fund its operations. It went bankrupt in 1842. The Belgian colonies seem to have been essentially deserted until 1870 when the State took them over as workfarms for beggars and vagrants. Wortel saw a major building episode as it was converted from a free colony with small houses and small farms to an unfree one with a large institution and a large farm. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, special sections were set up to care for colonists who were epileptics and colonists with tuberculosis.

Similar problems in the Netherlands led to the government taking over the unfree colonies including Veenhuizen in 1859, leaving the Society to run the remaining free colonies. Orphans were no longer accepted, and a major reorganization and rebuilding program began at the unfree colonies under the direction of the State.

At Veenhuizen, the Ministry of Justice took over the management of the colony and a major building program began in 1875, adding a new ensemble of characteristic buildings, fitting in the landscape grid of 1823, while keeping most of the original buildings in place. A Roman Catholic Church, guard barracks, new farms and industrial buildings were also erected. Agriculture was now combined with industrial activity at a grain mill and slaughterhouse. Prisoners began to be housed at Veenhuizen after 1918 and a wide range of people were held there. An active prison still operates at Veenhuizen.

The remaining free colonies in the Netherlands were also reorganized in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Society of Benevolence created larger farms to be run collectively rather than individually. Poor farmlands and heaths were converted to forestry. A school of horticulture was started in 1884 and one for forestry three years later. The population of the colonies slowly declined as did the resources of the Society of Benevolence. After the Second World War, the Society took in young offenders who were cared for and put to work on a learning farm. Portions of free colonies were also sold.

Today, the Society of Benevolence is still active in the Netherlands and owns 1,300 hectares of land, although it is not clear how much of this is within the nominated property. The Society still operates some social programs, but most of its work now concerns the heritage preservation of its original colonies, Frederiksoord and Wilhelminaoord.

Kempens Landschap, a land trust operating in the province of Antwerp, has been active in the Belgian colonies since 1997, owning land, conserving structures and encouraging contemporary use of the colonies. Institutions are still present today in the unfree colonies, with prisons at Wortel and Veenhuizen.

The social history of the colonies illustrates the circumstances by which people could be admitted to or dismissed from the colonies, both free and unfree.

At their peak in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, over 11,000 people lived in the Dutch colonies and this number slowly dropped through the remainder of that century and following. The population of the Belgian colonies peaked in 1910 with 6,000 residents. The practice of agriculture continued in the unfree colonies of the Netherlands until 1953, and until 1993 in Belgium. Private individuals farm the cultivated lands of the colonies today.

### **Boundaries**

The nominated property has an area of 2,012 ha.

The boundaries of the component parts have been revised for component part of Frederiksoord-Wilhelminaoord, and for Veenhuizen. Those of Wortel has been kept as originally proposed in the first nomination dossier. The revisions have been made on the basis of the identified attributes to the proposed Outstanding Universal Value, the conditions of authenticity and integrity, as well as following the ICOMOS advice given during the Advisory process.

ICOMOS agrees with the revised boundaries of the component parts.

In response to the World Heritage Committee recommendation, the States Parties advised that they do not propose a buffer zone for the nominated property as possible threats are addressed by existing spatial regimes in the surrounding areas. The regimes for spatial planning next to the nominated property are very strict in the Netherlands and in Flanders (Belgium). The nominated property has also been included nominally in the Nationale Omgevingsvisie – NOVI), the new Dutch Environmental Law, which reinforces this protection. In addition, the States Parties consider the introverted nature of the colonies, their lack of connection to the surrounding landscape, and in some cases the forested character of the nominated property edge or character of the surrounding land (eg. nature reserve) provide either no reason for a buffer zone, or protection, for the nominated property.

The issue of buffer zones was the subject of communications between ICOMOS and the States Parties, including the sending of additional information.

While appreciating the existing protection mechanisms around the component parts, ICOMOS none the less considers that a buffer zone is needed for the nominated property in order to define a zone of additional sensitivity which is reinforced through mechanisms under the *Operational Guidelines*. The buffer zone is considered necessary as it would offer protection to the immediate setting by sustaining the connection of the component parts to their settings, as well as constraining or even prohibiting certain types of activities. The definition of the buffer zone should consider the specific measures that would need to be put in place in terms of planning and protection policies. ICOMOS recommends that the establishment of the buffer zone be submitted through a Minor Boundary Modification request.

### **State of conservation**

The present state of conservation is generally good. The elements that give structure to the colonies, the roads, avenue plantings of trees, water management features and grid patterns that space out the fields and structures are largely intact.

The buildings that are in place and represent the different stages of development of the colonies appear mostly to be in good condition, although it is sometimes difficult to tell where losses of built fabric have occurred. Some structures that once existed are shown as areas of archaeological value.

No buildings from the founding period at Wortel survive. All of the structures now present date from late 19<sup>th</sup> century and later.

Most of the component parts have had a declining population during the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The States Parties have initiated actions to reverse this as well as the decay and abandonment of buildings.

ICOMOS notes that a difference exists in the implementation of conservation practice by each State Party.

For the Netherlands, emphasis is placed on adaptive re-use of buildings. There are also examples of the contemporary construction of other buildings, some of which are less commendable. The modern construction of very large farm buildings is also seen in the component parts in the Netherlands.

For Belgium, the conservation work is more in line with traditional restoration of materials and fabric. There is also some adaptive reuse. As regards the design of new buildings, there is generally a more conservative trend.

The States Parties will pursue a common holistic approach to conservation practice applied across the nominated property. ICOMOS considers the form, scale and placement of new buildings should adhere

closely to those of the original buildings in each component.

### **Factors affecting the property**

Although the colonies are in rural areas, villages and towns are close by, and there is risk of further urban development in and around them. At each of the component parts, nearby urban fabric abuts portions of the boundaries.

Another factor is the pressure from incremental change that could lead to the loss of spatial form. One attribute of the landscape is the orthogonal layout of avenues that cross each other rhythmically. ICOMOS considers that it is fundamental that there is no change in the grid dimensions that characterize each colony.

Changes can also happen in the spatial pattern due to the erection of new buildings. The full or final extent of what construction will be allowed is not yet defined.

This issue also applies to the acceptable size of new structures, especially farm buildings. It is also important that the States Parties define the allowable enlargement of these buildings.

Changes in agricultural practices or in what crops are grown should be carefully considered.

The operational requirements of the current prison and detention uses also contributes to the loss of spatial cohesion of the component parts.

No wind turbines are present in the nominated property, nor are they allowed. The use and placement of solar power panels is discussed in the management plan regarding visual impacts.

ICOMOS notes that there is minimal organized tourism at present, although aggregate tourist numbers for some component parts are substantial. There has been no analysis of the visitor carrying capacity. Minor roads within the colonies are very narrow, and problems could arise with increasing vehicle traffic.

The nomination dossier notes that floods are a natural risk to the property and that flood protection systems are in place. Another potential natural risk is damage to trees and avenue plantings from high winds during storms.

ICOMOS considers that the main threats to the property are uncoordinated incremental changes in the structure of the farms and in the expansion of adjacent villages.

### 3 Proposed justification for inscription

#### Proposed justification

The nominated property is considered by the States Parties to be of Outstanding Universal Value as a cultural property for the following reasons:

- The property is testimony to an exceptional and nationwide Enlightenment experiment in social reform, through a system of large agricultural home colonies. The property pioneered the domestic colony model, and for more than a century they influenced various types of custodial care in Western Europe and beyond.
- The property is also an extraordinary series of planned panoptic disciplinary settlements, created as isolated settlements in remote areas. The landscape organisation reinforced the disciplinary order and economic health of the colonies. They are an outstanding example of landscape design that represents an agricultural home colony with a social aim. The landscape patterns reflect the original character of different types of colonies and their subsequent evolution. They illustrate the extent, ambition and evolution of this social experiment in its flourishing period (1818-1918).

#### Comparative analysis

The overall analysis has been developed in three stages: in the nomination dossier with a focus on the functional concept; in additional information provided in response to the ICOMOS Interim Report where it was extended with a reference framework of existing poverty reduction initiatives at the time of the Colonies of Benevolence, and later initiatives such as Garden Cities and allotments; and following the report of the ICOMOS Advisory Process where it was augmented with methodically constructed settler colonies and plantations.

The Colonies of Benevolence are presented in the nomination dossier as the earliest and best-preserved example of a national, utopian system of agricultural colonies to tackle poverty. Two themes are considered, 1) agricultural settlements resulting from land reclamation, and 2) experiments in social engineering to address poverty, inspired by the Enlightenment.

A long list of 226 sites was developed that related to at least one of the two themes and this list was reduced by applying certain criteria and a timeframe from 1750 to 1918 to identify sites that derived from the same intellectual movement as did the Colonies of Benevolence. However, few sites operated at the scale of the Colonies. On the theme of land reclamation, examples of polders were reclaimed from the sea rather than heathland. These examples were not linked to the second theme of poverty reduction. In this way, the long list was reduced to a short list of 11 sites which were subjected to a detailed comparison. None

of these 11 sites are on the World Heritage List or a Tentative List.

Five criteria related to the two overarching themes were then identified as the basis for further analysis: 1) Interaction with the environment, 2) Designed as a system on a national scale, 3) Use of the cultural landscape for poor relief and agriculture, 4) Scale and impact, and 5) Social experiment. Of the 11 sites subjected to detailed analysis, five are from Germany, three are from the United States of America and one each is from the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Belgium.

Some German sites were large settlements, but they did not have the same degree of landscape organisation as did the Colonies of Benevolence. The remaining German sites, and examples from the United Kingdom and the Netherlands were all founded later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as part of a Protestant revival. They do not match the Colonies of Benevolence in terms of preserved structures or landscape organization. Finally, two utopian colonies in the United States were later voluntary utopian settlements that did not have the social objectives of the Colonies of Benevolence.

In summary, the States Parties argue that no property on the World Heritage List or Tentative lists is comparable to the Colonies of Benevolence. No other site is comparable either in scale, degree of landscape organisation or social objective.

ICOMOS considered that the comparative analysis as presented in the original nomination dossier narrowed in focus too quickly, excluding other categories of possible comparators. The United Kingdom of the Netherlands was not the only country in Europe to face the problem of urban poverty in this era. Many European countries experienced similar problems and crafted their own responses, but these were excluded from the analysis because they did not involve reclaiming land for agriculture.

ICOMOS considered that the Colonies of Benevolence should be understood within the wider political and economic context of the industrialising countries of Western Europe in order to demonstrate why they might be considered as an exceptional response. ICOMOS asked in its Interim Report for the States Parties to provide possible comparisons to other Utopian colonies that were developed during a similar timeframe to address similar social problems, especially religious colonies, and prison or convict labour colonies which also operated at a large scale. These latter categories are not confined to Europe. It was considered useful to see a wider comparison to these other phenomena in order to understand how the Colonies of Benevolence might be considered distinctive.

Additional information received from the States Parties in February 2018 explained thoroughly the initial framing of the comparative analysis, situating the Colonies of Benevolence within the range of responses to poverty reduction adopted in Europe in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Categories of sites related to poverty reduction such as allotment gardens, Garden Cities and smallholding schemes were added to the original categories that included almshouses, workhouses, penal colonies, utopian religious communities, home colonies for the unemployed, and colonies for young offenders. These categories were examined against the criteria of 1) social engineering in which people were reformed by labour, 2) agricultural settlements with a social aim, and 3) operation at a large scale (nationwide or national).

When considered in this light, only the categories of home colonies for the unemployed and those for young offenders were comparable to the approach represented by the Colonies of Benevolence. Penal colonies had different aims, as they were focused on punishment rather than reform of the individual. Utopian religious colonies did not operate at the scale that is found among the Colonies of Benevolence.

In re-examining the shortlisted sites noted above in the original comparative analysis, the utopian religious colonies are now excluded, and among the remaining sites, which are described above in the original analysis, all represent home colonies that used agricultural labour as a means to reform the individual, and none operated at the scale seen at the Colonies of Benevolence.

The States Parties argue that the serial approach is justified to represent the two basic typologies of the free and unfree colonies, and also their development and adaptation to serve different target groups, and to respond to the functional needs of each colony and the changing social and legal frameworks of each country.

ICOMOS considers that the augmented comparative analysis now set the Colonies of Benevolence apart from other heritage sites that represent a means of poverty relief or social engineering as practiced in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe. It also clarifies the basic typology of the free and unfree colonies and how the components have been chosen to represent a range of adaptive responses as the colonies evolved over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The analysis is further augmented in a revised nomination dossier submitted by the States Parties with the consideration of settler colonies and plantations. Spatial characteristics and methodical construction have also been included much more systematically as assessment criteria in the analysis.

The selection of colonies to be included in the nomination has been undertaken to satisfy the conditions of authenticity and integrity, clearly reflecting the ideals relating to poverty reduction that guided their foundation.

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ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies consideration of the nominated property for the World Heritage List.

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#### **Criteria under which inscription is proposed**

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (ii) and (iv).

*Criterion (ii): exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;*

The States Parties consider the nominated property is testimony to an exceptional and nationwide Enlightenment experiment in social reform, through a system of large agricultural home colonies. The property pioneered the domestic colony model, and for more than a century they influenced various types of custodial care in Western Europe and beyond.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property does exhibit an important influence regarding social reform for the poor or socially disadvantaged during the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Western Europe and beyond. This influence as domestic agricultural colonies relates to architecture, planning and landscapes which were studied and copied widely.

*Criterion (iv): be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;*

The States Parties considers the nominated property is also an extraordinary series of planned panoptic disciplinary settlements, created as isolated settlements in remote areas. The landscape organisation reinforced the disciplinary order and economic health of the colonies. They are an outstanding example of landscape design that represents an agricultural home colony with a social aim. The landscape patterns reflect the original character of different types of colonies and their subsequent evolution. They illustrate the extent, ambition and evolution of this social experiment in its flourishing period (1818-1918).

ICOMOS considers the nominated property is an outstanding example of domestic agricultural colonies created in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the social aim of poverty alleviation. The property reflects the approach to both free and unfree colonists in their original and evolved forms, as isolated panoptic disciplinary settlements with a particular landscape organisation.

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ICOMOS considers that criteria (ii) and (iv) have been justified.

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### **Integrity and authenticity**

#### **Integrity**

The States Parties note that the basic principle and the objective of the Colonies of Benevolence remain recognisable in the orthogonally structured landscape with avenues, meadows, fields and forests, and with the characteristic houses, farms, institutions, churches, schools and industrial buildings.

It is suggested that since their founding, the colonies' landscapes have evolved. Of the current buildings, some were built by the Society of Benevolence, some by the Belgian and Dutch governments (unfree colonies) and some by private individuals (free colonies). Some of the changes have affected their visual qualities through the effects of privatisation and temporary neglect. Adaptive re-use has occurred in unoccupied buildings.

The States Parties inform that there are no pressure of urbanisation from the surrounding areas.

ICOMOS notes that the boundaries of the Dutch colonies of Wilhelminaoord and Veenhuizen are both reduced from those that existed during their founding period. Portions where integrity has been judged to have been lost have been omitted from the nominated property. Also, uncultivated or sparsely cultivated lands have been excluded.

Frederiksoord and Wilhelminaoord retain avenues, with a rhythmic pattern of house placement reflecting the ribbon layout of the founding period of these colonies, but the layout of Veenhuizen has been obscured by a modern village (excluded from the property). The 20<sup>th</sup> century use of institutional buildings as active prisons at Wortel and Veenhuizen has also impacted adversely on the coherence of the landscape.

ICOMOS notes that there are other specific issues with the integrity of individual component parts.

The changes made during the 19<sup>th</sup> and mid-20<sup>th</sup> centuries can be said to reflect the evolution of the colonies as social communities, none the less the later changes impact on the coherence of the settlements.

While the conditions of integrity of the nominated property have been affected by various changes as noted, overall ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity have been met. The revised nominated property reflects the best-preserved cultural landscapes of the free and unfree colonies.

#### **Authenticity**

The authenticity of the nominated property is based on the location, form and design, and materials.

ICOMOS considers the distinctive cultural landscape with its structured form, plantings, surviving buildings and archaeological sites from the period when the colonies were created and flourished, truthfully and credibly tell the story of the Colonies of Benevolence and reflect the proposed Outstanding Universal Value.

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ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity and authenticity have been met for the nominated property.

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### **Evaluation of the proposed justification for inscription**

ICOMOS considers that the overall comparative analysis justifies consideration the Colonies of Benevolence for the World Heritage List, and criteria (ii) and (iv) have been justified.

ICOMOS also considers that the conditions of integrity and authenticity have been met for the nominated property.

#### **Attributes**

Key attributes include the four colonies with their evidence related to the flourishing period. In the case of the free colonies, this includes the long ribbons of houses and small farms set in a pattern of orthogonal roads and fields. The unfree colonies include larger building complexes, housing, and larger farms set in an orthogonally organised landscape of avenues and fields.

Features of the landscapes include their orthogonal structure with avenues, avenue plantings, other plantings, meadows, fields and forests, and with the characteristic houses, farms, institutions, churches, schools and industrial buildings.

## **4 Conservation measures and monitoring**

### **Conservation measures**

Major restoration programs have been undertaken regarding buildings and other characteristic elements of the grid in all of the colonies. However, restoration approaches might differ because of the differing local context. Where a building is vacant or due to fall vacant, appropriate forms of rehabilitation are sought consistent with the historical function of the building. Adaptive reuse is a recent development, embracing recreational functions and cultural tourism.

As noted above, the States Parties will pursue a common holistic approach to conservation practice applied across the nominated property.



## Monitoring

Monitoring indicators have been developed for the nominated property, responding to the World Heritage Committee recommendation and the comments of the ICOMOS Advisory Process. They also reflect the current Outstanding Universal Value proposed by the States Parties.

Annual reports by the colony managers will describe progress in implementing the management plans as they pertain to each colony. Another aspect of monitoring is that colony managers will annually track the number of revisions that have been made to zoning plans or environmental plans and the number of environmental permits applied for and granted (the Netherlands) or notifications and authorisations issued (Belgium) in each colony.

An annual monitoring report will be prepared for the nominated property, and this will feed back into management.

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ICOMOS considers the conservation measures and arrangements for monitoring are generally satisfactory.

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## 5 Protection and management

### Documentation

Building and landscape features in each component have been inventoried. Maps and lists of structures have been provided. No mapping is presented regarding current ownership patterns, and the extent of the existing prisons and state institutions are not presented.

### Legal protection

The property is protected by various and very different tools that range in scale from national laws to municipal codes, covering both natural and cultural values.

At the national level, all the Dutch colonies are fully or partially protected as villagescapes. In Belgium, Wortel is a protected cultural heritage landscape. An environmental permit is required for (re)building or demolition within a protected villagescape. In protected cultural heritage landscapes in Belgium, owners and administrators are under the obligation to keep the landscape in good condition by carrying out maintenance and preservation works. The Flemish Region issues binding advice regarding heritage in protected areas.

ICOMOS notes that various protected areas do not always align with the boundaries of the component parts. This is seen in the extent of the protected villagescapes at Frederiksoord, Wilheminaoord, and Veenhuizen, where some parts of the components are not protected and/or some protected areas extend beyond the component boundary.

In both countries, representative buildings have been granted monument status and are protected. This includes a number of buildings and building ensembles within the colonies which are protected as individual monuments.

In the Netherlands, legislation for spatial planning and heritage has been simplified. A new Heritage Act entered into force in 2016. Regarding immovable heritage, this Act focuses on the preservation, the protection and the restoration of national monuments and archaeological monuments. A new Environment & Planning Act will enter into force in 2021 to regulate the protection of heritage values, replacing the existing Spatial Planning Act. The Environment & Planning Act provides opportunities for the integral protection of Outstanding Universal Value, and for the assessment of new developments. The Act contains separate, generic rules regarding the safeguarding of the qualities of a World Heritage site, and puts the State Party in a position to issue instructions to other authorities regarding the safeguarding of the values of World Heritage properties.

Additional and updated information has been provided on landscape protection in response to the World Heritage Committee recommendation.

ICOMOS considers that the legal protection is adequate for individual buildings and is generally adequate for the landscapes, but consideration should be given to ensuring the national villagescape protection should at least cover the full extent of Wilheminaoord.

### Management system

A transnational steering group has been established. The province of Drenthe (the Netherlands) and Kempens Landschap (on behalf of the Province of Antwerp, Belgium) each act as site holder. In consultation with Kempens Landschap, the province of Drenthe will assume general control in matters that transcend the two countries. The parties represented in the steering group have allocated financial and human resources for site management. The site holder is responsible for the proper management of the property. The site holder organises the activities for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of the property, and is also responsible for communication, coordination, monitoring and periodic reports. An Advisory Committee for Science, Education and Quality provides technical advice.

It appears that most responsibilities for the management of the property will be given to existing staff, rather than new dedicated staff. Duties of a site manager, one for each component or cluster of components, are expected to take up to 0.25% of a full-time equivalent position.

The States Parties have written a management plan which consists of a main document in which the proposed Outstanding Universal Value is summarised, the legislation which safeguards the sites is explained, as well as the managerial structure, the main challenges of its conservation and monitoring issues. It focuses on the main strategic activities and the general criteria for the conservation of all of the component parts, including long-term objectives for protection and rehabilitation.

This general document is supplemented by specific plans for the component parts, grouped into three sets: Frederiksoord-Wilheminaoord, Wortel and Veenhuizen. The specific plans include a range of measures, including reference to other relevant plans which deal with aspects such as trees, the management and maintenance of public spaces and greenery, and agricultural development.

The focus of the management plan is the preservation and reinforcement of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value for the series as a whole and for the individual colonies.

The States Parties have adapted the management plan given the revised series, proposed Outstanding Universal Value, attributes and boundaries, and in responding to the World Heritage Committee.

As the legislative protection mentioned above shows, the property is now being protected by various and very different tools. All these legal instruments provide sectorial guidelines or criteria for intervention and conservation of the property.

Regarding risk preparedness, the management plan has a brief analysis of risks and remedial measures are noted. However, no specific strategy is included.

ICOMOS considers that the organisation of the management system seems effective, including an intergovernmental committee to address issues between the States Parties. An ongoing challenge will be to manage the nominated property as a unified whole, especially to ensure that conservation approaches evolve in the same direction.

#### **Visitor management**

The current flow of tourists ranges from several thousands to 250,000 visitors per year per colony. It is expected that these numbers will increase slightly in the event of inscription.

Overall there is a relatively low level of visitation at present. Visitor centres have been established at each component part and other support facilities exist. Future plans for tourism development are briefly outlined in the nomination dossier, additional detail is provided in the management plan, and further planning measures are proposed.

Traffic management is recognised as an issue given potential increases in traffic on the very narrow roads.

#### **Community involvement**

The involvement of the local communities and residents is organised in all component parts. In both States Parties, they are closely involved in the development of their environment, being a common policy for governing authorities. This includes formal and other means.

#### **Evaluation of the effectiveness of the protection and management of nominated property**

Documentation for the nominated property is generally adequate.

Legal protection is adequate for individual buildings and is generally adequate for the landscapes, but consideration should be given to ensuring the national villagescape protection should at least cover the full extent of Wilheminaoord.

ICOMOS considers that the organisation of the management system seems effective, including an intergovernmental committee to address issues between the States Parties. An ongoing challenge will be to manage the nominated property as a unified whole, especially to ensure that conservation approaches evolve in the same direction.

## **6 Conclusion**

ICOMOS considers that the overall comparative analysis justifies consideration of the Colonies of Benevolence for the World Heritage List, and criteria (ii) and (iv) have been justified. The conditions of integrity and authenticity have been met for the nominated property.

Conservation measures and arrangements for monitoring are generally satisfactory.

Documentation for the nominated property is generally adequate.

Legal protection is adequate for individual buildings and is generally adequate for the landscapes, but consideration should be given to ensuring the national villagescape protection should at least cover the full extent of Wilheminaoord.

ICOMOS considers that the organisation of the management system seems effective, including an intergovernmental committee to address issues between the States Parties. An ongoing challenge will be to manage the nominated property as a unified whole, especially to ensure that conservation approaches evolve in the same direction.

## 7 Recommendations

### Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the Colonies of Benevolence, Belgium and the Netherlands, be inscribed as a cultural landscape on the World Heritage List on the basis of **criteria (ii) and (iv)**.

### Recommended Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

#### Brief synthesis

The Colonies of Benevolence were an Enlightenment experiment in social reform which demonstrated an innovative, highly influential model of pauper relief and of settler colonialism – the agricultural domestic colony. Beginning in 1818, the Society of Benevolence founded agricultural colonies in rural areas of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands (now the Netherlands and Belgium). The Colonies of Benevolence created a highly functional landscape out of isolated peat and heath wastelands through the domestic colonisation of paupers. In the process, colonists would become morally reformed ideal citizens, adding to the nation's wealth and integrating marginal territories in emergent nation states.

Over a seven-year period, almost 80 square kilometres of wastelands, domestic territory considered unfit for settlement, were reclaimed in Colonies. The colonies featured orthogonal roads, ribbons of houses and small farms, and communal buildings. From 1819 onwards, 'unfree' colonies were also founded, the last in 1825; these featured large institutions and larger farms again set in an orthogonal pattern of fields and avenues, and housed particular groups of disadvantaged people with support from the State. At their peak some 18,000 people lived in the colonies, including those within the property.

The process of transforming its poorest landscapes and citizens through a utopian process of social engineering went on until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. After 1918, the colonies lost their relevance and evolved into 'normal' villages and areas with institutions for custodial care.

The property comprises four former colonies in three component parts: the free colonies of Frederiksoord and Wilhelminaoord, the colony of Wortel which was a free colony that evolved into an unfree colony, and the unfree colony of Veenhuizen.

**Criterion (ii):** The Colonies of Benevolence bear testimony to an exceptional and nationwide Enlightenment experiment in social reform, through a system of large agricultural home colonies. They proposed a model of social engineering based upon the notion of 'productive labour', with the aim of transforming poor people into 'industrious' citizens and uncultivated 'wastelands' into productive land. In addition to work, education and moral upliftment were

considered essential contributions to the aim of transforming poor people into self-reliant citizens.

The Colonies of Benevolence were developed as systematic self-sustaining agricultural settlements with state-of-the-art social facilities. As such, the Colonies of Benevolence pioneered the domestic colony model, attracting considerable international attention. For more than a century, they exerted an influence on various types of custodial care in Western Europe and beyond.

**Criterion (iv):** The Colonies of Benevolence are an outstanding example of domestic agricultural colonies created in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the social aim of poverty alleviation. Deliberately cultivated as 'islands' in remote domestic heath and peatland areas, the Colonies implemented the ideas of a panoptic institution for the poor in their functional and spatial organisation.

They are an outstanding example of a landscape design that represents an agricultural home colony with a social aim. The landscape patterns reflect the original character of the different types of Colonies and their subsequent evolution, and illustrate the extent, the ambition and the evolution of this social experiment in its flourishing period (1818-1918).

#### Integrity

The property contains all the attributes which convey the Outstanding Universal Value. It includes key examples of both free and unfree colonies. All component parts consist of a combination of relict landscape layers which together illustrate the flourishing period of the Colony model. In the case of the free colonies, attributes include the long ribbons of houses and small farms set in a pattern of orthogonal roads and fields. The unfree colonies include larger building complexes, housing, and larger farms set in an orthogonally organised landscape of avenues and fields. Features of the landscapes include their orthogonal structure with roads, avenue plantings, other plantings, meadows, fields and forests, and with the characteristic houses, farms, institutions, churches, schools and industrial buildings.

While there have been changes and evolution over time, the property reflects the best-preserved cultural landscapes of the free and unfree colonies.

#### Authenticity

The authenticity of the property is based on its location, form and design, and materials. The distinctive cultural landscape with its structured form, plantings, surviving buildings and archaeological sites from the period when the colonies were created and flourished, truthfully and credibly tell the story of the Colonies of Benevolence and reflect the Outstanding Universal Value.

The use of the Colonies for agriculture and the social objectives formulated by the Society of Benevolence over two centuries were mainly continued and supplemented with new functions, which redefined the original social significance of the Colonies, in the spirit of the Colonies and adapted to changing times. The connecting factor is not one single 'authentic' period, but the landscape structure which has developed in two determining phases: the first phase of the creation (1818-1859), the phase of the further evolution, the phase of state institutions and privatisation (1860-1918).

#### Protection and management requirements

The property is protected by various and very different tools that range in scale from national laws to municipal codes, covering both natural and cultural values. These provide sectorial guidelines or criteria for intervention and conservation of the property.

Legal protection is adequate for individual buildings. In both countries, representative buildings have been granted monument status and are protected. This includes a number of buildings and building ensembles within the colonies which are protected as individual monuments.

At the national level, all the Dutch colonies are fully or partially protected as villagescapes. In Belgium, Wortel is a protected cultural heritage landscape. Consideration should be given to ensuring the national villagescape protection should cover the full extent of Wilheminaoord.

In the Netherlands, a new Environment & Planning Act will enter into force in 2021 to regulate the protection of heritage values, replacing the existing Spatial Planning Act. The new Act provides opportunities for the integral protection of Outstanding Universal Value, and for the assessment of new developments.

The organisation of the management system for the property seems effective. This includes an intergovernmental committee to address issues between the States Parties, a transnational steering group, the designation of site holders in each country, a technical advisory committee, site managers and staff.

There is a management plan consisting of a main document related to the whole property, as well as three specific plans for the component parts. The focus of the management plan is the preservation and reinforcement of the Outstanding Universal Value for the series as a whole and for the individual colonies. Risk preparedness is addressed through existing mechanisms rather than a specific strategy.

Visitor management is achieved through a range of measures including visitor centres, interpretive materials and support facilities, and further measures

are planned. Traffic management is recognised as an issue.

Local communities and residents are closely involved in the management of the property through formal and other means.

An ongoing challenge will be to manage the property as a unified whole, especially to ensure that conservation approaches evolve in the same direction.

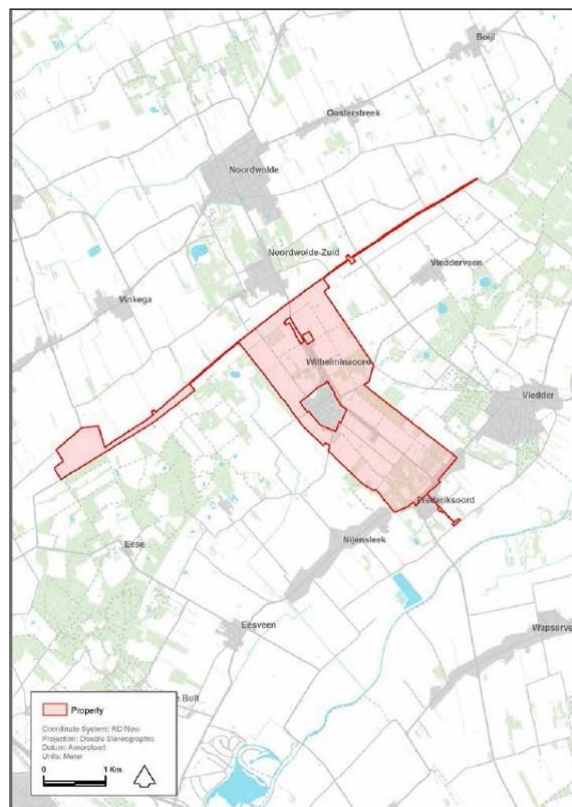
#### Additional recommendations

ICOMOS further recommends that the States Parties give consideration to the following:

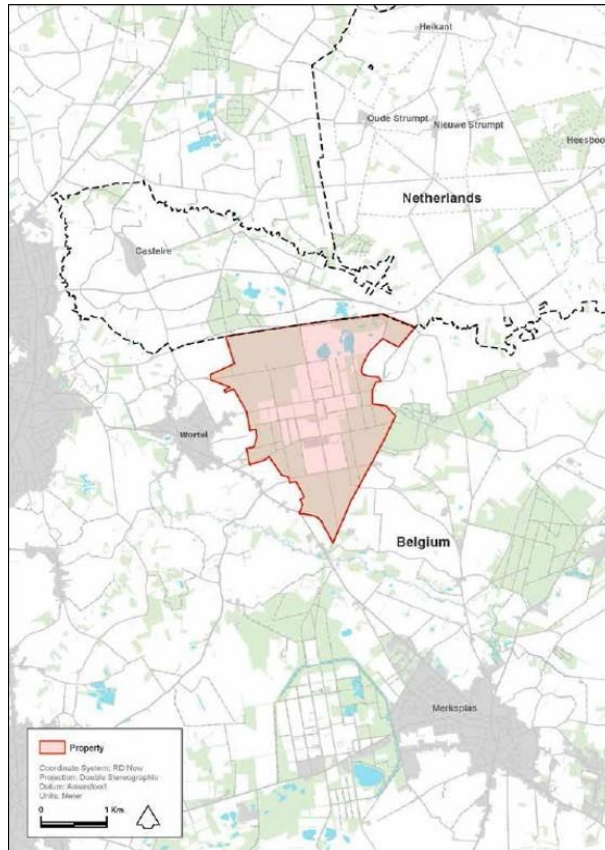
- a) Establishing a buffer zone, in order to ensure the protection of the component parts from any potential threats, through a Minor Boundary Modification process, to be submitted to the World Heritage Centre by 1 December 2023,
- b) Ensuring the national villagescape protection for the full extent of Wilheminaoord,
- c) Ensuring the form, scale and placement of new buildings closely adheres to those of the original buildings in each component,
- d) Ensuring the conservation of the grid dimensions that characterize each colony,
- e) Ensuring management of the property as a unified whole, especially that conservation approaches evolve in the same direction,
- f) Enhancing the mapping of the property to document current ownership patterns and the extent of the existing prisons and state institutions;



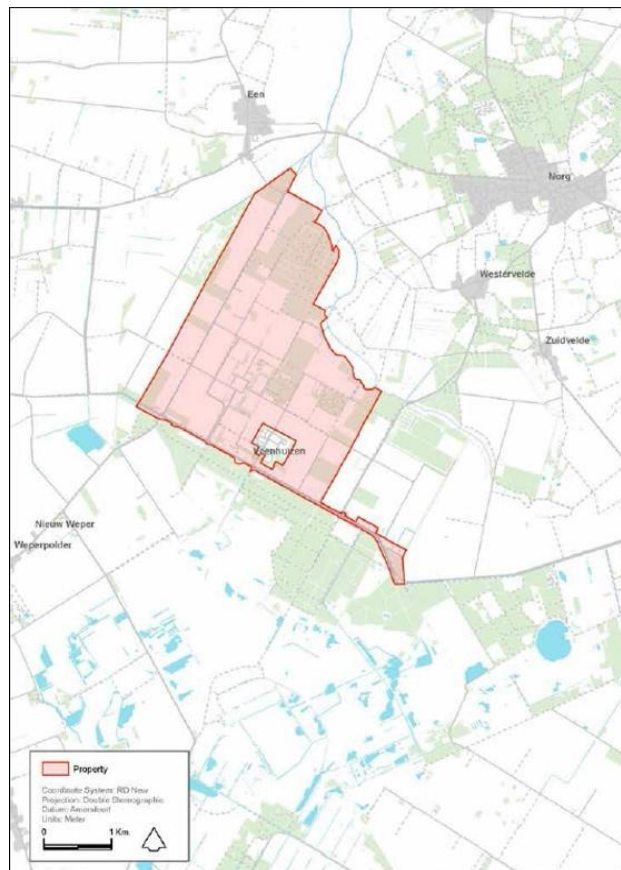
Maps showing the location of the nominated components (February 2020)



Maps showing the boundaries of component part A Frederiksoord-Wilhelminaoord (February 2020)



Maps showing the boundaries of component part B: Wortel (February 2020)



Maps showing the boundaries of component part C: Veenhuizen (February 2020)