
Bellinzona (Switzerland) No 884

1 Basic information

State Party
Switzerland

Name of property
Three Castles, Defensive Wall and Ramparts of the Market-Town of Bellinzona

Location
Bellinzona
Canton of Ticino

Inscription
2000

Brief description
The Bellinzona site consists of a group of fortifications grouped around the castle of Castelgrande, which stands on a rocky peak looking out over the entire Ticino valley. Running from the castle, a series of fortified walls protect the ancient town and block the passage through the Ticino valley. A second castle (Montebello) forms an integral part of the fortifications, while a third but separate castle (Sasso Corbaro) was built on an isolated rocky promontory south-east of the other fortifications.

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report
10 March 2023

2 Issues raised

Background
The World Heritage Committee inscribed the property in 2000 on the basis of criterion (iv). A map of the attributes of the property was drawn up for the purposes of inscription, but the State Party did not propose a buffer zone. The retrospective declaration of Outstanding Universal Value was adopted in 2013 (Decision 37 COM 8E).

Modification
The purpose of this minor boundary modification proposal is to create a buffer zone for the property.

The proposed buffer zone has an area of 90.8061 ha. Its basic purpose is the monitoring of the inscribed property and the nearby areas, and particularly the control of urbanisation and architectural interventions. This approach is aimed at preserving the landscape characteristics of the property, and thus allowing the emergence of the

monumental qualities of the castles, which are testimony to medieval military engineering.

The buffer zone has been designed from the perspective of the spatio-temporal continuity of the town, in which the urban fabrics immediately outside the walls form an integral part of the ensemble, and which includes the historic centre and fabrics from periods up to the 20th century and more recent constructions. Rather than applying strict urban stratification based on identifying strata from different historic periods, the approach is more coherent, enabling the perception of harmonious urban continuity.

The delineation of the buffer zone is also based on natural features wherever possible. It follows the topography to the north, in line with the parallelism of the medieval architecture, and is aligned with the natural boundary of the River Dragonato to the south, including a wide strip of Alpine hills. It also includes the Alpine meadows near the Castle of Sasso Corbaro to the east, and then runs down the slopes to the banks of the Ticino to the west, to include the Murata.

To the north, the perimeter line changes direction at the intersection of the Via Henri Guisan and the Via San Giovanni. This change of direction is probably intended to enable the inclusion of the Church of San Giovanni in the buffer zone, given that the angle provides no additional protection for the view of Castelgrande, and that only the church is included in the block that terminates at its limit facing the Via cancelliere Molo.

The State Party indicates that the buffer zone was designed on the basis of a contextual analysis, taking account of relations and visual axes both towards and from the property. However, ICOMOS notes that in the valley area to the west, where the altitude is low and the emerging character of the attributes disappears, visibility is substantially reduced. Post-inscription developments along the axis in the direction of Italian Lombardy do not preserve the visual relationships with the Murata, even inside the buffer zone.

It is important to note furthermore that the Murata is completely hemmed in by recently built structures on either side of the Via Murata. The adjacent buildings block the panoramic view from the north side, and their use cannot be considered compatible with the character of the property.

It should also be stressed that the whole of the zone north-west of the Murata and along the Ticino is currently undergoing rapid urban expansion, with some large-scale projects. New projects may be developed on unoccupied land that is not currently urbanised, and this could have an additional impact on views. The considerable size of the recently erected buildings in this zone, including those close to the Murata, is visible on satellite images.

ICOMOS notes that the visual integrity of the zone around the Murata is vulnerable and jeopardises the property's

Outstanding Universal Value. It is recommended that prevention and mitigation measures be taken.

The legal framework governing cultural property protection is set out in the Law of 13 May 1997 on the protection of cultural properties. In accordance with this law and the decision of the State Council of the Canton of Ticino of 12 October 2022, the proposed buffer zone is now considered to be a "*Perimetro di rispetto cantonale*". As for protective measures, any project planned or built anywhere in the buffer zone requires a permit issued by the Cantonal Office for Cultural Properties, which is the executive body responsible for managing the property, in conjunction with the Cantonal Commission for Cultural Properties.

The State Party stresses that the property management plan is currently being revised by the relevant authorities. The revision will take the proposed buffer zone into account and will set out the measures necessary to make the protection of the property operational. Protection will be ensured by management focused on the Outstanding Universal Value and its associated attributes.

The legal and governance framework at several levels, and the management system set up to implement the protection measures, are considered to constitute a coherent basis to ensure adequate management inside the property protection perimeter and the buffer zone. ICOMOS notes however that no mention is made of any Heritage Impact Assessments for projects planned inside the buffer zone, which could potentially impair the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.

ICOMOS considers that the proposed delineation of the buffer zone is adequate. It provides an additional layer of protection for the inscribed property. However, to guarantee stronger protection, ICOMOS recommends that Heritage Impact Assessment mechanisms for the buffer zone, and the surrounding area, be integrated into the management system.

3 Recommendations

Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the proposed buffer zone for the Three Castles, Defensive Wall and Ramparts of the Market-Town of Bellinzona, Switzerland, be **approved**.

Additional recommendations

ICOMOS further recommends that the State Party give consideration to the following:

- a) Finalising the management plan currently in its revision phase, concentrating on the Outstanding Universal Value of the property and its attributes, while paying particular attention to the key visual perspectives,
- b) Implementing systematic Heritage Impact Assessment mechanisms for any project

planned or under way inside the buffer zone, and in the surrounding zones, that could have an impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the property,

- c) Introducing building regulations in the urban expansion zone to the north-west of the buffer zone, by setting standards for scale and character. The aims of this regulation are to ensure the architectural compatibility of new buildings with the property, and to preserve views and the landscape,
- d) Ensuring that synergies are generated between the property management plan and the national and cantonal urban planning instruments, so as to incorporate urban planning guidelines that take into account visual axes and panoramas, in the urban planning of the buffer zone perimeter and its surrounding and territorial setting;