
Umm Al-Jimāl (Jordan) No 1721

1 Basic information

Official name as proposed by the State Party

Umm Al-Jimāl

Location

New Umm Al-Jimāl Municipality
Mafrāq Governorate
Jordan

Brief description

The nominated property of Umm Al-Jimāl is a rural settlement in northern Jordan that developed organically on the site of an earlier Roman settlement around the 5th century CE and functioned until the 8th century CE. It preserves the basaltic structures of mostly domestic and religious character from the Byzantine and Early Islamic periods that represent the local style architecture of the Hauran region, with some notable examples of earlier Roman imperial-type military buildings which have been repurposed by the later inhabitants of the town. The settlement formed part of a broader agricultural landscape that included a complex water catchment system, which sustained agricultural and animal herding activities of the population of Umm Al-Jimāl.

Category of property

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

Included in the Tentative List

29 March 2018

Background

This is a new nomination.

Consultations and technical evaluation mission

Desk reviews have been provided by ICOMOS International Scientific Committees, members and independent experts.

An ICOMOS technical evaluation mission visited the nominated property from 9 to 13 July 2023.

Additional information received by ICOMOS

A letter was sent to the State Party on 9 October 2023 requesting further information about the justification for inscription under criteria (iii), (iv), (v), and the buffer zone.

Additional information was received from the State Party on 31 October 2023.

An interim report was provided to the State Party on 19 December 2023, summarising the issues identified by the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel.

Further information was requested in the interim report on: the rationale for the selection of the nominated site, the comparative analysis, the term “Hauran”, the documentation, conservation measures, and the Management Plan.

Additional information was received from the State Party on 25 January 2024.

All additional information received has been incorporated into the relevant sections of this evaluation report.

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

13 March 2024

2 Description of the nominated property

Note: The nomination dossier and additional information contain detailed descriptions of this property, its history and its state of conservation. Due to limitations on the length of evaluation reports, this report provides only a short summary of the most relevant aspects.

Description and history

The nominated property of Umm Al-Jimāl is located in present-day northern Jordan, within the Hauran plateau that spreads from southern Syria to northern Jordan. It preserves the architectural vestiges of a rural settlement that existed in this place between the 5th and 8th centuries CE.

The earliest structures uncovered at Umm Al-Jimāl that testify to the existence of a settlement date back to the 1st century CE, when the area formed part of the Nabataean Kingdom. They were discovered southeast of the nominated property, in the area currently referred to as Early Village or *al-Herri*. In the 2nd century CE, the Romans annexed this territory to their province of Arabia. The town they built at Umm Al-Jimāl is today evidenced by imperial structures, such as the West Gate, Praetorium, parts of the town wall and a water reservoir, that can still be seen at the site. The extent of these earliest Nabataean and Roman settlements cannot be confirmed as the village and the town were destroyed in the 3rd century CE, and the building material was used in later constructions.

The nominated property encompasses the ruins of the town that gradually grew on the site of the Roman settlement in the Byzantine period, through the Islamic conquest in the 7th century, until the 8th century CE. At that time, Umm Al-Jimāl developed organically to become a typical rural Hauranian settlement, its layout and basalt architecture reflecting local building traditions rooted in pragmatism, cost-effectiveness and durability of the constructions. The town was enclosed within a stone wall – a rare occurrence among the Hauranian rural settlements – equipped with five gates. It was composed of clusters of multi-storey houses with courtyards arranged in three neighbourhoods. It

included sixteen churches of different types (such as basilicas and hall churches) – some with mosaics – of which six were freestanding and ten were built within domestic complexes. Evidence from the Islamic period shows conversion of a room in a house into a mosque, with a minaret added. There is also a possibility that at least one of the churches was converted into a mosque after the Islamic conquest. Older Roman imperial structures of military, administrative or religious use were incorporated into the structure of the town in the Byzantine period after being re-purposed. For instance, the 2nd-century Praetorium was converted into a house and fully refurbished, the 4th-century military fort (castellum) was adapted to serve as a market area, and the 4th-century Roman temple was re-purposed for domestic use. The secondary function of the Barracks, another fort constructed probably around the 5th century CE, remains unconfirmed.

The town formed part of a broader agricultural landscape that included a complex water catchment system ensuring irrigation of the fields. It has been in operation from the Nabataean period onwards, and is still used today. It included a network of channels connecting the settlement to the nearby wadi, and at least twenty-six reservoirs located in the town and four in the village. The water system was based on a local concept and designed to ensure sustainable use of scarce water resources. Animal husbandry was part of life of the Umm Al-Jimāl population, as evidenced by stables on the ground floors of the houses and mangers in the courtyards.

The exact chronology of the settlement, as well as the dating and process of construction of houses are still not well understood. The preserved ruins showcase the design ideas and construction techniques that distinguish the Hauran basalt architecture, such as the use of flat corbels system for roofing, small arches or windows above door lintels, cantilevered steps in staircases located outside the rooms, or a rare interlocking stone construction technique.

A rich epigraphic corpus in Greek, Nabataean, Safaitic, Latin and Arabic uncovered on the site and spanning many centuries provides insights into the history and functioning of Umm Al-Jimāl, and sheds light on the changes in the religious beliefs of its inhabitants. The inscriptions are displayed at the Inscription Garden adjacent to the Interpretive and Hospitality Centre, located within the area of the nominated property.

After the 8th century CE, Umm Al-Jimāl was largely abandoned due to a combination of environmental, political and economic factors, which included the shift of key trade routes away from the site. It was used occasionally as a temporary shelter by nomadic groups or pilgrims. In the 19th and 20th centuries some of its buildings were reoccupied by Druze people and the Mas'eid Bedouin community. In 1972, the site was fenced, the modern town now growing around it.

The nominated property has an area of 42.584 ha, and a buffer zone of 258.722 ha. The boundaries of the nominated property runs mostly in parallel to the ancient town wall and includes a small portion of agricultural fields on the east, which evoke the ancient agricultural identity of the town. The buffer zone includes the area of the Early Village and some of the Roman and Byzantine cemeteries, none of which have survived until today.

In the additional information provided in October 2023, the State Party explained that the water catchment system of Umm Al-Jimāl exemplifies the most common features and construction principles of water systems typical for the Hauran, and is the most complete model thereof.

The State Party further expanded on the evidence of resilience of the local population, seen through ways the people adapted to the socio-cultural, economic and political shifts over the years. The economic shifts led the population of Umm Al-Jimāl to move between nomadic and sedentary lifestyles, to which the nominated property and the Early Village are said to testify. Roman military buildings clearly mark the imperial political influence on Umm Al-Jimāl. These structures, however, are also an example of an unusual blend of foreign designs and traditional construction techniques, thus testifying to the ways people adapted the imported ideas to the local context. A similar mix of local and foreign ideas can be observed through the study of inscriptions which demonstrate the gradual change of religious beliefs by the people of Umm Al-Jimāl.

In additional information sent in January 2024, Umm Al-Jimāl was presented in the context of agricultural identity of rural Hauranian settlements and their role as suppliers of grain to the surrounding urban centres. It was said to represent the hinterland of the imperial capitals and urban centres of the time, giving insight into the rural lifeways of the Hauranians rooted in agro-pastoral activities and semi-nomadism.

State of conservation

The northern part of the site has been left “as found” and is deteriorating, while in the southern part only minor interventions and preventive conservation actions have been undertaken on specific structures since 1983. Scattered blocks are methodically stored in front of the houses from which they fell off. Some of the structures have been propped or consolidated, others were dismantled after being thoroughly documented and rebuilt as per original (anastylosis of the cathedral completed in 2016). In general, the physical fabric of the buildings at the lower levels is in good condition, the upper levels are in need of greater control of the decay processes. House 119 is the only reconstructed structure, transformed into a visitor centre. The water catchment system was revitalised in 2016-2017 and reactivated in 2019-2021, with a modern delivery system added.

The nominated property has been thus far minimally excavated (approximately two percent). Of more than 170 structures identified, only a few have been investigated

archaeologically. The first field survey which included mapping of key buildings took place in the early 20th century CE. The site was first excavated in 1956, after which regular archaeological works have been undertaken since 1974 until today. Further research is currently planned in the churches.

Based on the information provided by the State Party and the observations of the ICOMOS technical evaluation mission, ICOMOS considers that the state of conservation of the nominated property is satisfactory, but a lack of regular conservation and maintenance of the larger part of the site has resulted in the progressive decay of the structures. ICOMOS notes that the site is purposefully preserved in a deeply ruined state.

Factors affecting the nominated property

Based on the information provided by the State Party and the observations of the ICOMOS technical evaluation mission, ICOMOS considers that the main factors affecting the nominated property are of anthropogenic and environmental nature.

The land surrounding the nominated property is subject to increasing development pressures. To the west, private residences are developing on small plots, while to the east the ancient agricultural economic model with homesteads on large plots continues. Urban growth and development within the buffer zone are being managed through zoning regulations and building height restrictions. To ensure access to water of the growing population without encroaching on the site where most of the reservoirs are located, a reversible system of hoses, mirroring the ancient water channels, has been installed.

Pressures from tourism are not a threat at the moment but numbers of visitors are anticipated to rise. Given its size, the nominated property can handle large numbers of tourists if visitors are spread across the property. Bigger groups gathered within small spaces or singular buildings threaten the integrity of the structures. New road infrastructure had been planned in the buffer zone to manage the flow of traffic. Its implementation has been halted and the State Party advised that it would not proceed with these developments. A new transitional landscaped area with facilities and staff offices is being developed on the southern limit of the nominated property, in place of the current parking.

Looting and vandalism have occasionally occurred despite security measures in place. A full review of site security is envisaged in the draft Umm Al-Jimāl Site Management Plan (UJSMP). The nominated property has been fenced off since 1972. The current barrier will be replaced with a more adequate (design-wise) low steel rail fence with attractive lighting and a security camera system. The ancient town wall with five gates constitutes a secondary fencing limit.

Three telecommunication network antennas located within the buffer zone contribute to visual pollution. They will be removed by the State Party.

Floods represent a major hazard for the nominated property. To mitigate the risks, the State Party rehabilitated the wadi in the western section of the buffer zone to capture rain run-offs. However, due to climate change, the site may face in the future growing challenges with rainwater disposal. The State Party monitors the relevant climate indicators and is engaged in a comprehensive water study. Earthquakes are also a major risk, as the nominated property is located close to one of the seismic source zones. The State Party monitors damages and instabilities to the ruins to prevent collapse of structures.

ICOMOS considers that given the flood hazards and the risk of earthquakes, a disaster risk management plan should be developed as part of the UJSMP of the nominated property. Security measures related to the safety of visitors and risks related to instability of structures on the site should also be considered.

ICOMOS further considers that a Heritage Impact Assessment should be conducted for all development projects planned within the nominated property, such as the tourist infrastructure refurbishments planned at the southern entrance, or in the vicinity of the site. It should include any planned expansion of road infrastructure or other large construction projects within the buffer zone.

ICOMOS considers that the state of conservation is satisfactory and that factors affecting the nominated property are adequately managed. A disaster risk management plan should be developed and included as part of the overall UJSMP.

3 Proposed justification for inscription

Proposed justification

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

- Umm Al-Jimāl is a rural settlement that exemplifies in an outstanding way the local architectural tradition representative of the Hauranian culture, and showcases the technological innovativeness and skilfulness of the people inhabiting a water-scarce environment in sustainably managing their limited natural resources.
- As the largest town in the region, Umm Al-Jimāl from the Late Antique to Early Islamic periods (5th-8th centuries CE) bears exceptional testimony to the rural way of life on the Hauran plateau, and the adaptation and resilience of its people to the centuries of socio-cultural change and foreign imperial influence.
- At Umm Al-Jimāl, past and present meet through the continuation of local techniques, socio-cultural values and cultural traditions upheld by the inhabitants of the contemporary town, which ensures the preservation of the Hauranian culture.

Based on the nomination dossier, the key attributes of the nominated property are the architectural vestiges of the rural settlement of Umm Al-Jimāl dating from the Late Antique to Early Islamic periods, and including the water catchment system. Intangible heritage of the local communities is considered by the State Party to contribute to the proposed Outstanding Universal Value.

In the additional information provided in October 2023, the State Party explained that no other Late Antique rural town or village in the Hauran appears to have been larger than Umm Al-Jimāl, which probably played the role of a regional economic hub within the network of rural settlements.

The prominence of the town among other rural settlements of the time was further re-emphasised in additional information sent in January 2024.

Comparative analysis

The comparative analysis has been developed around similar rural settlements (urban properties being considered only if they showed clear similarities with the nominated property) that developed organically rather than being planned, and sites demonstrating local character with minimal foreign/imperial intrusions. Two parameters have been used for analysis: the state of preservation of architectural remains and the persistence of intangible cultural values associated with the site among the communities living in or around it. The Late Antique period was used as the chronological timeframe. The comparative analysis has examined properties within the local context, settlements on the Hauran plateau, and in the wider Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East which were inscribed on the World Heritage List, inserted in the Tentative Lists of States Parties, as well as other properties.

Among the closest comparators on the World Heritage List are the rural settlements of Um er-Rasas (Kastrom Mefa'a) (Jordan, 2004, criteria (i), (iv), (vi)), and the Ancient Villages of Northern Syria (Syrian Arab Republic, 2011, criteria (iii), (iv), (v)), which preserve similar architectural remains but made of limestone. Moreover, the Syrian property does not represent Hauranian traditions and the layout of this relict agricultural landscape shows imperial influences.

The use of basalt is well demonstrated by the monumental architecture of the Ancient City of Bosra (Syrian Arab Republic, 1980, criteria (i), (iii), (vi)), as well as two Decapolis cities, Gadara (Modern Um Qeis or Qays) and Abila City (Modern Qweilbeh), both on the Tentative List of Jordan. These properties, however, represent urban settlements, with strong imperial influences.

Among hundreds of rural Hauranian settlements that developed in the Roman and Byzantine times, Syrian sites are less known, being documented mostly through surveys. Key comparable sites of Sharah and Mseikeh are smaller than Umm Al-Jimāl. Among the sites in Jordan, many, such as Khirbet es-Samra, have been

disturbed by modern developments, while others, such as Umm al-Surab, are not as well preserved as the nominated property.

In additional information provided in January 2024, the State Party explained that while rural settlements in the region are devoid of monumental structures, they provide important insights into local traditions and lifeways of the Hauranian people, with their distinctive cultural identity. They throw light on the socio-economic structure of the Hauranian societies, whose values are reflected, among others, in the architectural vestiges, their designs and functions that resisted foreign influences.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property represents a typical Hauranian rural settlement of Late Antiquity, similar to many others that developed as a result of trade expansion facilitated by the strategic location of the Hauran; which eventually also led partly to their abandonment. Trade and pilgrimage routes might have facilitated local commercial-agricultural exchanges between these rural settlements, with Umm Al-Jimāl serving perhaps as regional commercial hub within this network.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis did not prove that Umm Al-Jimāl can be considered exceptional or innovative in terms of architectural or technological solutions. However, it has demonstrated that the nominated property's well-preserved vestiges that showcase the distinctive Hauranian basalt architecture epitomise the Hauranian culture with its agro-pastoral identity, reflecting the social values and cultural traditions of the Hauranian people.

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

Criteria under which inscription is proposed

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (iii), (iv) and (v).

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

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the exceptionally well-preserved ruins of Umm Al-Jimāl evoke in an outstanding way the rural lifestyle of the Hauranian people. By preserving the local architectural character and cultural traditions over centuries despite imperial influences and socio-economic and religious change, they testify to the resilience of the local culture. The traditions and skills epitomised by Umm Al-Jimāl are said to be still alive in the population living around the site.

ICOMOS considers that Umm Al-Jimāl is a typical rural Hauranian settlement that developed around economy based on farming and husbandry, and resisted change brought by different political powers through the centuries. As one of the most representative examples of a

Hauranian rural town, it epitomises the lifestyle of the Hauranian people and demonstrates key aspects of their cultural traditions and social values, as reflected in the well-preserved distinctive basalt architecture that used local masonry styles. The economic significance of Umm Al-Jimāl in the region can be linked to its presumed role as the commercial centre within the network of similar rural settlements.

ICOMOS also considers that while the connection of local communities to their heritage sites is crucial for their effective management and preservation, the proposed values of Umm Al-Jimāl as an uninhabited archaeological site are not sustained by the intangible heritage of the local communities living around it.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been demonstrated.

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;

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the exceptionally well-preserved architectural ensemble of Umm Al-Jimāl is an outstanding testimony to the building capability of the Hauranian people, displaying an unmatched quantity and variety of structures within a large Late Antique settlement. The preserved buildings showcase the local character of this organic rural settlement, as well as technical and stylistic possibilities of construction in basalt on a scale that cannot be found elsewhere in the Mediterranean. Umm Al-Jimāl also demonstrates the ingenuity of the people who managed to harness rainwater to sustain agricultural production in an arid environment and adapt their lifestyle to the changes over time by shifting periodically between nomadic and sedentary life.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property is comparable to other Hauranian settlements in terms of its architecture and building techniques, basalt as the material of construction dictating the masonry styles and designs. It can be considered neither exceptional nor innovative in terms of architectural solutions or technological novelty. The quantity of structures preserved cannot be considered the basis for the site's exceptionality, while the typologies that represent the Late Antique period do not appear to be of outstanding nature compared to other Hauranian settlements.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has not been demonstrated.

Criterion (v): be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that Umm Al-Jimāl, with its innovative water catchment system, is an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement sustained over centuries through the sustainable management of scarce resources in an arid environment and adapting to the changing circumstances. The traditions and technologies from the ancient times continue to be embraced by the contemporary population living around the ruins.

ICOMOS considers that Umm Al-Jimāl represents the traditional pattern of rural settlements in terms of its organic development and design that considered customs and traditions of the region. A typical rural settlement in the Hauran, the nominated property with its water catchment system cannot be said to stand out among other similar settlements, with which it shares key characteristics and ways in which each of them responded to the climatic and environmental conditions of the Hauran.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has not been demonstrated.

ICOMOS consider that the nominated property meets cultural criterion (iii), and that criteria (iv) and (v) have not been demonstrated.

Integrity and authenticity

Integrity

The integrity of the nominated property is based on the wholeness and intactness of the vestiges of Umm Al-Jimāl settlement dating to the 5th-8th centuries CE, preserved in a ruined state within a broader agricultural landscape.

The boundaries of the nominated property have been drawn to encompass all the attributes of the settlement enclosed within the town wall. The water catchment system has been partly included within the nominated property (reservoirs and channels), and partly remains outside it (water dam and wadi). The agricultural landscape of Umm Al-Jimāl, the earlier Nabataean/Roman settlement and the ancient cemeteries located outside the town wall were left outside the boundaries of the nominated property, since they lost their integrity and authenticity. The wadi rehabilitation project undertaken in the buffer zone to the west of the site has heavily affected the landscape setting of the nominated property.

The vestiges of the settlement, preserved purposefully in a ruined state, are in satisfactory overall condition, but in many cases the structures are not secure and some attributes are vulnerable. The focus of conservation interventions has been on selected structures at the site, thus many others are fragile due to the lack of maintenance. The northern side of the nominated property has been left untouched entirely and suffers from decay. This, paired with absence of full documentation of

the site, represents a risk to the integrity of the nominated property, even if environmental and anthropogenic factors do not pose an immediate threat to it. Only one building has been reconstructed and operates as a visitor centre and a museum, where some of the excavated artefacts are stored. Others are in Amman, with selected ones on loan at foreign institutions.

A contemporary road running through the southeast corner of the nominated property and other intrusive infrastructure have been removed from the site in 2021.

Three telecommunication network antennas and modern buildings within the buffer zone compromise the visual integrity of the site. The antennas will be removed.

ICOMOS considers that despite some concerns related to the transformation of the former agricultural landscape setting of the nominated property, and the fact that parts of the water catchment system have been left outside the boundaries of the nominated property, the included attributes are sufficient as an expression of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value. Therefore, the integrity of the nominated property has been demonstrated. However, it remains vulnerable due to a lack of maintenance that left some of the attributes in a fragile state. ICOMOS considers that mitigation measures should be implemented by the State Party to address these issues.

Authenticity

The authenticity of the nominated property is based on the ability of the archaeological vestiges of the Umm Al-Jimāl settlement to credibly express the proposed Outstanding Universal Value. The nominated property can be said to be authentic in the form, design, and material.

The majority of archaeological vestiges of Umm Al-Jimāl have been untouched for centuries, only a few out of some 170 structures having been investigated. Interventions in the buildings have been kept to the minimum and include mostly consolidation; in a few cases anastylosis was completed. Heavy intervention can only be observed at one house (House 119) at the southern end of the nominated property which has been reconstructed to serve as a visitor centre and a site museum. A new transitional landscaped area for the visitors, planned within this space, will be integrated with the ruins so as not to affect the proposed Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated property.

The revitalised water catchment system still serves the community living around the site. Its modern hose delivery system mirrors the ancient network of channels. The wadi to the west of the nominated property has been rehabilitated, which heavily affected the landscape setting of the nominated property.

ICOMOS considers that the wider context of the nominated property has been compromised by contemporary urban pressures. The agricultural landscape which supported the existence of the

settlement, and the ancient burial grounds have not survived the passage of time. However, ICOMOS considers that the preserved attributes truthfully convey the proposed Outstanding Universal Value and therefore the authenticity of the nominated property has been demonstrated.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that, although vulnerable, the conditions of integrity of the nominated property have been met, and that the conditions of authenticity of the nominated property have been met.

Boundaries

There are no inhabitants in the nominated property. The population within the buffer zone counts approximately 2,800 people (2021 estimate).

The boundaries of the nominated property and of the buffer zone follow the network of contemporary roads or limits of land plots, except for the southeast corner and the western limit of the buffer zone, where the delineation is arbitrary. The boundaries of the nominated property runs along the ancient town wall with a small portion of agricultural fields added to the east but without two adjoining plots with private residences. To the west, three small sections of land between the town wall and the modern road have been left outside the nominated area due to existing property rights. No new construction is allowed within these alienated plots and the State Party is willing to expropriate the land to include it within the boundaries of the nominated property, when it becomes possible.

The buffer zone includes the immediate setting and the important views from the south and west, where the main entrances to the site are located. It adds extra protection, as the area is under special zoning regulations and requires Heritage Impact Assessments for any road projects proposed within it.

The complementary vestiges that used to testify to the earlier developments at Umm Al-Jimāl (Early Village) as well as the broader context of the settlement (burials, agricultural landscape) have been partly included within the buffer zone. These areas have been damaged to the point of loss of integrity and authenticity. The elements of the water catchment system that have been sustaining the village over centuries are located partly within the nominated property (reservoirs, channels) and partly outside it (the wadi with the water dam).

In the additional information provided in October 2023, the State Party clarified that besides the immediate setting and the viewsheds, the presence of ancient remains in the area has been considered when defining the buffer zone. As an exception, parts of known ancient cemeteries to the north and south of the nominated property have been left outside the buffer zone due to other factors. These sites are, however, completely destroyed.

Evaluation of the proposed justification for inscription

In summary, ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies consideration of the nominated property for the World Heritage List. The nominated property meets criterion (iii) as an example of a Hauranian rural settlement representative of the rural Hauranian culture with its agro-pastoral identity and lifeways. Criteria (iv) and (v) have not been demonstrated. The conditions of integrity and authenticity have been met, despite the setting of the nominated property not being preserved, and the integrity of the nominated property remaining vulnerable.

4 Conservation measures and monitoring

Documentation

The property has been inventoried and documented since the 1970s. However, the quality of this documentation is uneven. The published materials, reports, as well as unpublished reports from conservation activities are archived by the Department of Antiquities of Jordan (DOA), which also keeps key artefacts in Amman and Mafrāq. Some of the finds are on display in the Umm Al-Jimāl site museum. Fieldwork data is held by the Umm Al-Jimāl Archaeological Project (UJAP), which also maintains a digital photographic archive.

The documentation related to the state of conservation of the nominated property contains detailed assessment and conservation recommendations for eighteen of the most representative structures.

In additional information provided in January 2024, the State Party informed that full documentation, including stone-by-stone drawings and 3D models of all the structures within the nominated property, should be completed by 2026 using LiDAR scanning and 3D photogrammetry. It will include, where possible, the ancient water system, whose known features have been mapped.

ICOMOS considers that detailed baseline documentation of all the attributes of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value is key for any future management, conservation and monitoring activities, and preparation of this baseline documentation should be prioritised.

Conservation measures

Maintenance works are undertaken without a formalised plan, and at present only eighteen key structures selected based on their perceived cultural value are being monitored. Currently, there is no comprehensive conservation plan in place.

Conservation experts are available from the central office of the DOA upon request and are not on site. Funds for conservation projects are allocated on a case-by-case basis.

As explained in the additional information sent in January 2024, conservation interventions are implemented on an ongoing basis, as the documentation process progresses. Areas accessible to tourists are particularly targeted. The initial Umm Al-Jimāl Site Annual Plan (UJSAP) will be prepared based on the newest documentation and will stipulate conservation interventions for the entire site.

ICOMOS considers that development of a comprehensive conservation plan that would cover both the structural and surface conservation needs of the entire nominated property is urgently needed. It should be based on the assessment of risks to the attributes of the nominated property, irrespective of whether tourists have access to the selected areas or not.

ICOMOS further considers that including expert conservators to the management team available on site is desirable.

Monitoring

The monitoring system in its present form is rudimentary and does not encompass the detailed attributes of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value. A monitoring template has been drafted only for the selected buildings and is not formally utilised. The key indicators monitored relate to environmental and anthropogenic factors affecting the nominated property and the buffer zone, but it is not clear how the results are used to inform interventions. ICOMOS considers that the monitoring system should be further developed based on the relevant documentation of the attributes of the site and the identified threats.

ICOMOS considers that detailed documentation of the attributes of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value needs to be prepared to form the basis for future management and conservation, as well as development of a relevant monitoring system. Conservation plans need to be prepared in response to the assessment of risks and the related conservation requirements. High risk areas should be prioritised with documentation and assessment of conservation needs. ICOMOS considers that it would be advisable that the monitoring system is further developed to encompass all the attributes of proposed Outstanding Universal Value and is conceived for easy integration of its outcomes into the Periodic Reporting questionnaire.

5 Protection and management

Legal protection

Umm Al-Jimāl has been declared a National Property and Protected Area since 1939 and designated as “Antiquities Protectorate”. The site falls under the legal framework of the Antiquities Law 21/1988 and subsequent amendments, which prohibit the destruction, damage or alteration of the site, regulate development around it, thus providing for the existence of a buffer zone with legal restrictions on construction or modification of buildings, and regulate research and excavations.

The nominated property is owned by the State and its boundaries are registered with the Department of Lands and Survey (DLAS). The responsibility of its protection resides with the Department of Antiquities of Jordan (DOA) under the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MOTA). The buffer zone, largely privately owned, has been divided into five zones with varied restrictions related to land-use and type of construction allowed. Some of these zoning regulations are already formally binding, others are in process. Two existing buildings within the buffer zone violate the proposed restrictions. The DLAS, and Ministry of Public Works and Housing oversee issues related to the buffer zone, while the Ministries of Agriculture, Environment, Interior/Domestic Affairs, and Water and Irrigation have jurisdiction over water supply and distribution within the nominated property and the buffer zone.

Management system

The DOA is the competent authority in charge of the conservation and management of the nominated property. It is responsible for the administration, monitoring, protection, maintenance, preservation of the site, as well as for research. The DOA infrastructure includes national and regional jurisdictions. Umm Al-Jimāl is under the purview of DOA's Mafrāq Antiquities Directorate (MAD) and its Umm Al-Jimāl Site Management Unit (UJSMU). The UJSMU is responsible for the daily supervision of the site, monitoring of research activities, and state of conservation, and acts as a liaison with the local communities. At the technical level, UJSMU is led and reports to the regional Site Management Directorate (SMD). The MOTA through its Mafrāq office is the main authority in charge of tourism development, maintenance of tourist facilities, and all visitor-facing activities, including the development of visitor programming at Umm Al-Jimāl. Both DOA and MOTA have on-site offices at Umm Al-Jimāl.

Umm Al-Jimāl New Municipality (UJNM) collaborates with MOTA and DOA to protect the site and its surroundings while ensuring that economic benefits are reaching the local communities. In 2021, the UJNM opened a Cultural Heritage office, which helps to enforce buffer zone restrictions.

Umm Al-Jimāl Archaeological Project (UJAP) gathers the scientific team leading the academic research and provides advice related to the conservation work, interpretation and presentation of the nominated property. The UJAP engages local community members in archaeological research and development of the site.

The Umm Al-Jimāl Site Management Plan (UJSMP) is the framework that will be implemented by the SMD. The latter will oversee the formation of the Umm Al-Jimāl Joint Committee (UJ-JC) tasked with the preparation of the Umm Al-Jimāl Site Annual Plan (UJSAP), which will be implemented and monitored by UJSMU. A number of advisory committees envisaged under UJ-JC will support the development of the UJSAP, as well as its

implementation and monitoring. Representatives of local communities will be included in these committees.

The UJSMP is yet to be approved. The draft presents a five-year vision for the management of the site upon formalisation of relevant processes. The UJSAP should be ready within one year from the approval of the UJSMP. Timeline of the draft action plan included in the UJSMP is subject to the stipulations of the UJSAP. A Tourism Management Plan, addressing the risks of over visitation, and a management plan for the Umm Al-Jimāl Interpretive and Hospitality Centre are also envisaged along with the Site Facilities, Infrastructure and Security Plan.

In the long-term, the nominated property is envisaged as a catalyst for the interpretation and development of other sites in northern Jordan, in order to enhance understanding of regional cultural heritage.

The annual budget allocation from DOA is currently used for site operation. DOA and MOTA are committed to allocate funds to the nominated site annually. UJAP pledged to contribute annually for the next three years to ensure the implementation of UJSMP.

In the additional information sent in January 2024, the State Party provided a list of near and longer-term management goals. Subject to approval by the competent authorities, it includes formalisation of UJSMP, digital mapping and LiDAR scanning of the site, application of digital site-monitoring, preparing a list of conservation priorities, and continued research and excavations.

ICOMOS considers that an integrated disaster risk management plan should be developed as part of the comprehensive management plan. It should address the key natural threats to the nominated property, such as the seismic and flash floods hazards and make provisions for safety procedures for visitors that would take into account the instability of the ruins. Developing a research strategy to ensure that archaeological investigation across the site is consistent and targeted should also be envisaged.

Visitor management

There are two main entrances to the nominated property: one in the south where the Interpretive and Hospitality Centre with the Inscription Garden is located – and the other in the west – where the West Entry Park has been created in 2020. The Interpretive Trail, designed to start at either of the entrances, guides visitors through the ruins of Umm Al-Jimāl. The State Party plans to redesign the southern entry and ticketing infrastructure to enhance the existing tourist facilities. The current fence will also be replaced to better integrate the site with the surrounding landscape. Among other future developments is the Umm Al-Jimāl Heritage and Research Center, which will serve as a data archive, host a library, and serve as a hostel.

Jordan Tourism Board helps promote the site nationally and internationally. A tourism strategy is developed every five years by MOTA. The current one (2021-2025) is integrated with the draft UJSMP. In light of the potential

increase in tourism, a review of the tourist capacity assessment will be undertaken. A Tourism Management Plan will be developed as part of the overall UJSMP and will include site occupation restrictions, permit processes for events, staffing requirements as well as guidelines for security measures.

ICOMOS considers that, as a safety measure, signage and physical limitations to the tourist flow should be put in place to restrict access to zones where structures are unstable.

Community involvement

The local communities have been involved at each stage of the nomination process. The residents of modern Umm Al-Jimāl that spreads around the nominated property once lived among the ruins. Thus, they hold strong attachment to the site, which is an important factor in its preservation. Fostering local expertise and collaboration with the community in terms of effective site management, as well as job creation and economic empowerment of the population of modern Umm Al-Jimāl remain the key aspects of a multi-pronged approach to the site preservation. Several local heritage-related economic cooperatives have been established in the past years in this regard.

The State Party is engaging the local communities through both the Municipality and MOTA. Development of the Hauran Heritage Engagement Plan for community engagement, local development and public awareness and education is being envisaged.

Effectiveness of the protection and management of the nominated property

In summary, ICOMOS considers that the legal protection and the management system are adequate for ensuring protection of the nominated property.

Heritage Impact Assessment should be conducted for all development projects planned within the nominated property, including the tourist infrastructure refurbishments at the southern entrance, and any large construction projects within the buffer zone.

ICOMOS also considers that a disaster risk management plan should be prepared as part of the Umm Al-Jimāl Site Management Plan to address the seismic and flood hazards, and provisions made for safety procedures for tourists. Physical restrictions limiting access to areas with unstable structures should be considered.

6 Conclusion

Umm Al-Jimāl preserves the vestiges of a rural settlement of agro-pastoral character that testify to the traditions and lifeways of the Hauranian people from the 5th to the 8th century CE. It features the distinctive Hauranian basaltic architecture of mostly domestic and religious character, and includes an ancient water catchment system that is still being used by the present-day communities living around the site.

ICOMOS acknowledges the effort made by the State Party in preparing the nomination and commends the high level of participation of local communities in the process. ICOMOS also recognises the importance of the existing connection that the local communities hold to Umm Al-Jimāl that will ensure the preservation of this heritage site.

ICOMOS considers that the arguments provided by the comparative analysis justify consideration of this property for inscription on the World Heritage List, and that criterion (iii) has been justified. However, ICOMOS considers that Umm Al-Jimāl has not been proven to be exceptional as a typical rural settlement or innovative in terms of its architectural or technological solutions, thus criteria (iv) and (v) have not been justified. The conditions of integrity and authenticity have been met, although the integrity of the nominated property remains vulnerable, its wider context has been compromised and the agricultural landscape which supported the existence of the settlement in the Late Antique and Early Islamic period has not been preserved.

ICOMOS further considers that the protection and management of the nominated property are satisfactory. Complete baseline documentation of the nominated property needs to be finalised and the monitoring system further developed. The assessment of conservation interventions required should be prioritised to prepare a comprehensive conservation plan for the entire nominated property. Including expert conservators to the management team on site is desirable. A disaster risk management plan should be developed and integrated with the Umm Al-Jimāl Site Management Plan.

7 Recommendations

Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that Umm Al-Jimāl, Jordan, be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of **criterion (iii)**.

Recommended Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

Brief synthesis

Umm Al-Jimāl, in present-day northern Jordan, preserves the vestiges of a rural settlement that developed organically on the site of an earlier Roman settlement around the 5th century CE and functioned until the 8th century CE, when it was abandoned. Composed of clusters of multi-storey houses with courtyards arranged in three neighbourhoods, the town included sixteen churches of different types. Its layout and distinctive basaltic architecture of mostly domestic and religious character reflect local Hauranian building styles and designs rooted in pragmatism, cost-effectiveness and durability. A few notable well-preserved examples of earlier Roman imperial-type military buildings, which were incorporated into the structure of the town in the Byzantine period after being re-purposed, testify to the resilience of local traditions. The town formed part of a broader agricultural landscape that included a complex water catchment system, composed of a network of reservoirs and channels connecting the settlement to the nearby wadi, that ensured irrigation of the fields. Umm Al-Jimāl bears testimony to the rural way of life on the Hauran plateau in the Byzantine and Early Islamic periods, and epitomises the Hauranian culture with its agro-pastoral identity, reflecting the social values and cultural traditions of the Hauranian people. It provides a window into the hinterland of the imperial capitals and urban centres of the time.

Criterion (iii): As a typical rural Hauranian settlement that developed around agricultural and animal herding activities on the Hauran basaltic plateau, Umm Al-Jimāl is one of the most representative examples of the rural lifestyle of the Hauranian people, reflecting the key aspects of their cultural traditions and social values embodied in the well-preserved distinctive basalt architecture. By preserving the local architectural character and cultural traditions over centuries despite political or religious change, the property testifies to the resilience of the Hauranian culture.

Integrity

The property encompasses all the attributes of the settlement, including elements of the water catchment system, that are enclosed within the stone town wall. Preserved purposefully in a ruined state, these vestiges are in satisfactory overall condition, but in many cases the structures are not secured and some attributes remain vulnerable due to the lack of maintenance. The northern section of the property that has been left “untouched” entirely needs attention. The integrity of the broader setting of Umm Al-Jimāl has been compromised, as the

agricultural landscape that once supported the existence of the settlement has been transformed and the ancient cemeteries damaged. The wadi rehabilitation project to the west of the site has heavily affected the setting of the property. Some modern structures within the buffer zone further compromise the visual integrity of the property.

Authenticity

The property is authentic in its form, design, and materials. Only a few of more than 170 structures in Umm Al-Jimāl have been investigated archaeologically. Restoration interventions have been kept to the minimum and include mostly consolidation; in a few cases anastylosis was completed. The only reconstructed House 119 serves as a visitor centre and a site museum. The water catchment system has been revitalised with a modern hose delivery system that mirrors the ancient channels. The agricultural landscape setting of the property has been transformed in result of contemporary urban developments, and the ancient burial grounds located outside the settlement’s wall were damaged. The rehabilitation of the wadi to the west of the site has further negatively affected the setting of the property.

Protection and management requirements

The site of Umm Al-Jimāl is a National Property and Protected Area since 1939, designated as “Antiquities Protectorate”. It is owned by the State and its boundaries are registered with the Department of Lands and Survey. The property is protected by the Antiquities Law 21/1988 and subsequent amendments, which also provide for the existence of a buffer zone with legal restrictions on construction or modification of buildings. Zoning regulations further control urban development in the buffer zone.

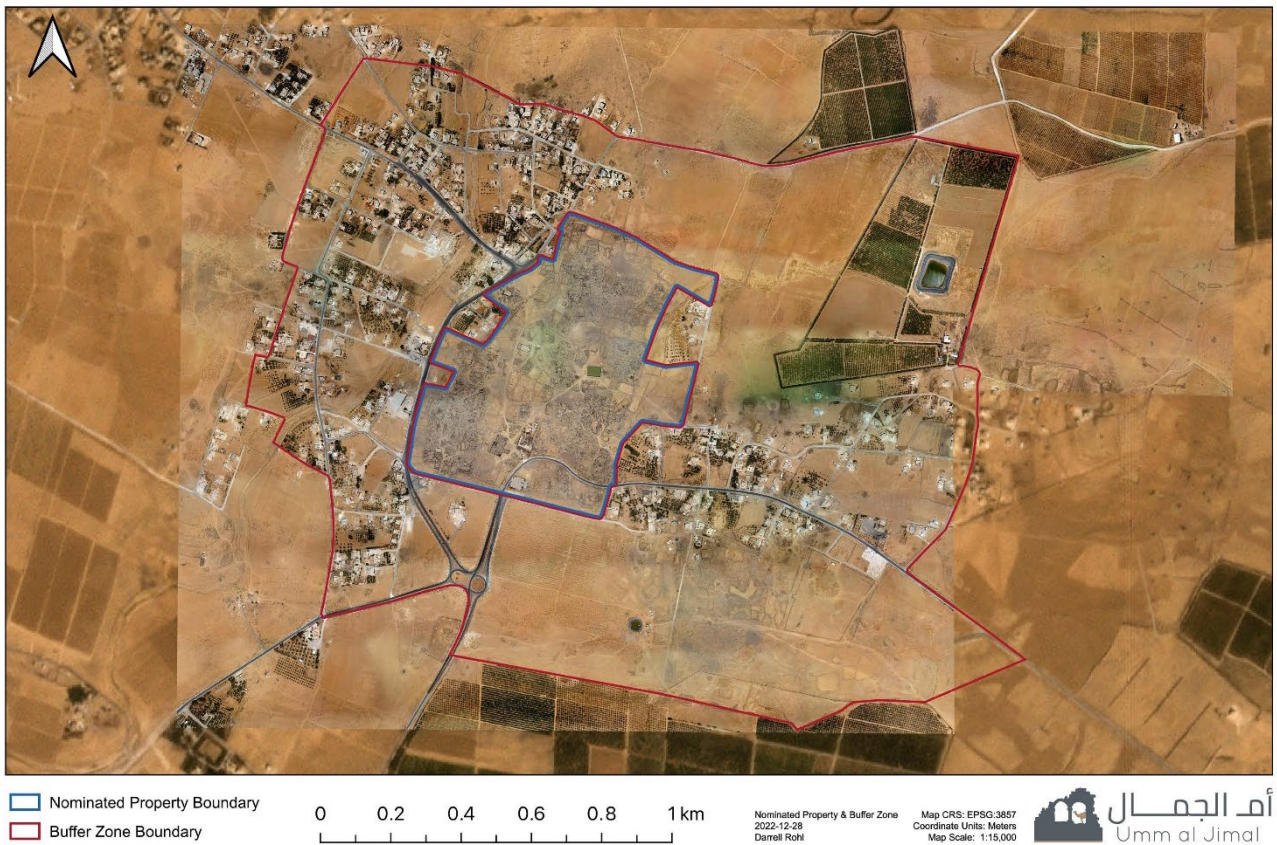
The Department of Antiquities of Jordan is responsible for the protection and management of the property. At the site level, Umm Al-Jimāl is under the purview of the Department’s Mafrāq Antiquities Directorate and its Umm Al-Jimāl Site Management Unit. The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities through its Mafrāq office assumes control of tourism development, activities and facilities. Umm Al-Jimāl New Municipality collaborates in protecting the site and enforcing buffer zone restrictions.

The Umm Al-Jimāl Site Management Plan, which presents a five-year vision for the future management of the site and formalisation of processes geared towards protection of the property, is yet to be approved.

Additional recommendations

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

- a) Completing, approving and implementing the Umm Al-Jimāl Site Management Plan,
- b) Finalising the baseline documentation and the assessment of conservation requirements, and preparing a comprehensive conservation plan that would include a maintenance programme for the entire site,
- c) Developing further the monitoring system based on the relevant documentation of the attributes of the site and the identified threats,
- d) Preparing a disaster risk management plan as an integral part of the Umm Al-Jimāl Site Management Plan,
- e) Considering introducing signage and physical limitations to restrict tourist access to areas with unstable structures,
- f) Developing a research strategy to ensure that archaeological investigation across the site is consistent and targeted,
- g) Formally adopting the zoning regulations related to land-use and type of construction allowed that cover the buffer zone,
- h) Developing and implementing a Heritage Impact Assessment for all development proposals within the property (including the tourist infrastructure refurbishments at the southern entrance) and major construction projects within the buffer zone,
- i) Informing the World Heritage Centre of the intention to undertake or authorise all major projects which may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, in line with paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*.



Map showing the boundaries of the nominated property