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# Paris, Banks of the Seine (France) No 600bis

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## 1 Basic information

### State Party

France

### Name of property

Paris, Banks of the Seine

### Location

Île-de-France

France

### Inscription

1991

### Brief description

From the Louvre to the Eiffel Tower, from the Place de la Concorde to the Grand and Petit Palais, the evolution of Paris and its history can be seen from the River Seine. The Cathedral of Notre-Dame and the Sainte Chapelle are architectural masterpieces while Haussmann's wide squares and boulevards influenced late 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century town planning over the world.

### Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

13 March 2024

## 2 Issues raised

### Background

The property was inscribed in 1991 under criteria (i), (ii) and (iv), without a buffer zone.

A retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value was adopted in 2017 (Decision 41 COM 8E).

The property is an outstanding urban architectural ensemble, united by a grandiose river landscape, that reflects the evolution and development of Paris and illustrates most of the styles, decorative arts and building methods employed in the city over nearly eight centuries of its history from early medieval times to the mid-20th century. Within its boundaries are architectural and urban masterpieces built either alongside the Seine River or overlooking it, and which can be seen from the river, as well as examples of the 17<sup>th</sup> through 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century urban planning.

The property enjoys the highest level of legal protection. All the major buildings within it are listed historic monuments with broad protection for the surroundings of

historic monuments. The inscribed property in its entirety is part of the listed site of the Urban Ensemble of Paris since 1975 and includes six Scheduled Sites. Two sections of the property, one on each bank of the river, are additionally covered by protection stemming from two Outstanding Heritage Sites (*Site Patrimonial Remarquable* – SPR), encompassing the Marais and a part of the 7<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*. The Local Urban Plan (*Plan Local d'Urbanisme* – PLU) of Paris complements the protection tools.

The State owns and manages directly or through its public entities most of the buildings within the property, as well as the river and its banks. Haropa Port Paris, together with the City of Paris, and partly with *Voies Navigables de France* (VNF), manages the quays, the body of water, and the associated spaces.

In 2020, a request for a minor modification to the boundaries of the property was submitted by the State Party, together with a request to create a buffer zone. The proposed modification envisaged adding to the existing ensemble architectural and urban monuments that were missing in the original nomination or for which adequate protection was not ensured at that time. The proposed modification was to improve the coherence of the boundaries of the property in relation to the Outstanding Universal Value for which it was inscribed. The list of elements proposed for integration with the property included a number of structures dating from the Middle Ages to the 21<sup>st</sup> century located on both banks of the river Seine and further away.

Simultaneously, a buffer zone of 3,157 ha was proposed. Its boundaries were defined through the study of the history and topography of the landscape, with consideration of the views to and from the Seine and using one of the 'growth rings' of the wider city.

No management plan for the property was available in 2020 and no special management measures were set out for the proposed buffer zone. The management arrangements in place were considered sufficient to cover the extended property and the buffer zone. Simultaneously, it was acknowledged that the urban and visual integrity of the site was vulnerable to the demands of real estate development, to the pressure from the intensity of economic uses, and to tourist numbers, all of which require rigorous controls to maintain Outstanding Universal Value. A need to define clear governance arrangements for the property and its setting to address these issues was thus pinpointed, as well as to promote sustainable tourism. The identified issues were to be addressed in the management plan.

Having examined the proposed modification to the boundaries of the property and the proposal for a buffer zone, the World Heritage Committee (Decision 44 COM 8B.54) decided that it:

1. Does not approve the proposed minor modification to the boundary of Paris, Banks of the Seine, France;
2. Refers the proposed buffer zone for Paris, Banks of the Seine, France, back to the State Party in order to allow it to set out more clearly the rationale for the delineation of buffer zone boundaries, in relation to views, potential threats, and to how they might support the Outstanding Universal Value of the property;
3. Recommends that before any new proposals are submitted, either for the property boundaries or for a buffer zone, a Management Plan for the property is prepared.

### Modification

The current minor boundary modification request has been prepared in response to the World Heritage Committee's decision and follows largely the advice provided by ICOMOS in its 2020 evaluation, which concluded that: "*While parts of the proposed boundary modifications could be seen to strengthen or complement the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, the scope of the whole goes beyond what can be captured by the current Outstanding Universal Value*". ICOMOS provided then a list of buildings that were considered not to reflect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property as defined at the time of its inscription on the World Heritage List: to be architectural and urban masterpieces that reflect the evolution and development of the city of Paris from the Middle Ages to the mid-20th century, located alongside the River Seine or overlooking it.

Accordingly, the current proposal reiterates the request for minor modification to the boundaries of the property submitted in 2020. However, buildings constructed post mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, structures that testify to the industrial or merchant past of the city, as well as those linked to service functions have been removed from the previously submitted list of structures proposed for integration with the inscribed property. It proposes to add, however, the entire Austerlitz station rather than only the oldest part thereof.

The present modification will increase the surface of the property from 365 ha to 531 ha.

The existing legal protection for the inscribed property covers already the additional areas within the newly proposed boundaries. The regulations in place (through the Heritage Code, Urban Planning Code, Environmental Code) ensure that the conservation, restoration and valorisation of the property will be done under the control of the State.

The existing and potential threats to the Outstanding Universal Value within the inscribed property and the extension are addressed through the revised PLU of Paris, which imposes height restrictions on constructions, controls new developments, and stipulates requirements for the transformation, restoration and enhancement of the existing structures. It further regulates other aspects of the built environment and the landscape, including preservation and valorisation of vistas of significance for the important historic urban planning projects; preservation of the urban fabric characteristic of each

neighbourhood in Paris through the Sustainable Development and Planning Project (*Projet d'Aménagement et de Développement Durable – PADD*); safeguarding of the architectural and cultural qualities of the urban heritage while adapting it to contemporary uses and norms. The buildings under the special protection of the City of Paris (*Protections « Ville de Paris » – PVP*) cannot be demolished, unless for security reasons, and need to be restored and enhanced. The PLU also restricts tourist rentals and puts in place measures to streamline visitor access to the central area of the city.

The creation of a SPR that would cover the perimeter of the property alongside the SPRs of the Marais and the 7<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* is being considered. It would simplify the varied protective measures deriving from different regulations and provide guidelines for the co-management of the property by the State and the City of Paris.

The management plan for the property is at the conceptualisation stage. It is to be developed once the boundaries of the property and of the buffer zone are validated by the World Heritage Committee, and after this year's Olympic Games. It will be prepared by the City of Paris in collaboration with the State services. The plan will cover the next ten years and should be completed by the end of 2026. The plan will provide details regarding the management system on the national, regional and local levels. It will include a plan of action with regards to the identified threats to the Outstanding Universal Value, protective measures for the property and its buffer zone, maintenance and conservation works, as well as presentation and tourism development. The management plan will be aligned with the existing protection regulations and planning tools. It will integrate the Master Plans currently in place for the selected major State buildings located alongside the Seine, as well as the newly revised (2022) Architectural, Landscape and Environmental Requirements for the Enhancement of the Banks of the Seine in Paris (*Cahier des prescriptions architecturales, paysagères et environnementales des Berges de Seine dans Paris*). These Requirements provide guidelines to enhance and valorise key features of the banks of the Seine, improve accessibility, and preserve harmony and uniformity of appearance. They set out controls over the body of water and prescribe rules for temporary or seasonal uses and occupation of the thoroughfares of the lower quays of the banks of the river.

With regards to the buffer zone, and in response to Decision 44 COM 8B.54, the State Party explained that the proposed buffer zone of 3,194 ha aims to protect the vistas from the property taking into consideration potential zones of urban densification. Its limits have been defined taking into consideration the historical and landscape topography of the city, vistas from and towards the river from various points within Paris, as well as the historical limits of the capital. Accordingly, the buffer zone follows essentially the Wall of the Ferme Générale, an 18<sup>th</sup> century enclosure wall of Paris. The boundaries of the buffer zone include in the north the

southern slope of the Montmartre hillside with panoramas from the river, the Montparnasse cemetery on the south, reaching Place Denfert Rochereau and Place d'Italie, and extend horizontally from Porte Dauphine to Place de la Nation.

The majority of the buffer zone, like the inscribed property, lies within the listed site of the Urban Ensemble of Paris, except for a small section in the south-east end of the buffer zone (left bank) and two sections in the western end (right bank). Several listed historic monuments and Scheduled Sites are located within the proposed buffer zone, and numerous other structures are protected through PVP. In two sections of the proposed buffer zone, the Conservation and Development Plans (*Plan de sauvegarde et de mise en valeur* – PSMV) accompanying the SPRs of the Marais and the 7<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* apply. In the remainder of the buffer zone, the PLU of Paris is in operation in the same way as in the property itself. Special protections and regulations exist for the sector of Montmartre.

ICOMOS considers that the proposed minor boundary modification justifies integration of the majority of the indicated buildings and ensembles as architectural masterpieces that complement the inscribed property. However, ICOMOS notes that parts of the Champs Elysées, Palais d'Iéna and the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées do not overlook the river Seine and does not offer a direct visual link with the river, even though this axis, which was designed by Colbert but never completed, is closely linked to the Place de la Concorde and the Tuileries Gardens.

ICOMOS recognises that the boundaries of the buffer zone, which have been established to protect the views to and from the river, correspond largely to the limits of the listed site of the Urban Ensemble of Paris. Thus, ICOMOS considers that the buffer zone is equipped with adequate restrictions placed on its use and development that together with the controls offered through the revised PLU of Paris provide protection that supports the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.

ICOMOS further considers that preparation of a management plan is of utmost importance. The plan should set out clear guidelines regarding the management system of the property, coordinated with the management of the buffer zone. It should be aligned with the existing protection regulations and planning tools, in particular the PSMV for Marais and the 7<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*, the revised PLU of Paris, as well as the Architectural, Landscape and Environmental Requirements for the Enhancement of the Banks of the Seine in Paris, to address the vulnerabilities of the property, especially in terms of the urban and visual integrity of the site and in view to promote sustainable tourism.

### 3 Recommendations

#### Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the proposed minor modification to the boundaries of Paris, Banks of the Seine, France, be **approved**.

ICOMOS recommends that the proposed buffer zone for Paris, Banks of the Seine, France, be **approved**.

#### Additional recommendations

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

- a) Developing as a matter of urgency a management plan for the property that will cover the buffer zone and submitting it to the World Heritage Centre for review by ICOMOS.

