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Betreft Ontwikkelingen in de Sluisbuurt en mogelijke effecten op
Grachtengordel

Onze referentie
B-2017-26

Geacht College,

Hierbij bied ik u in afschrift de brief aan van de directeur van het UNESCO Werelderfgoedcentrum, bevattende een reactie op de melding aan UNESCO van de voorgenomen ontwikkelingen in de Sluisbuurt en de mogelijke effecten op het werelderfgoed Grachtengordel van Amsterdam. De brief gaat vergezeld van een *technical review* door ICOMOS, de inhoudelijk adviseur van het Werelderfgoedcomité.


In de aangepaste plannen die aan UNESCO zijn voorgelegd is naar mijn mening op overtuigende wijze aangetoond dat de visuele impact van de Sluisbuurt op het Werelderfgoed zeer gering is. ICOMOS geeft in haar *technical review* een aantal aanbevelingen. Ik verzoek u deze bij uw verdere besluitvorming te betrekken. Specifiek breng ik de opmerking van ICOMOS onder uw aandacht, dat vormgeving en materiaalkeuze van de hoogbouw in de Sluisbuurt van invloed kunnen zijn op de zichtbaarheid.

De gemeente Amsterdam en het stadsdeel Centrum – laatstgenoemde als verantwoordelijke siteholder van het Werelderfgoed – hebben zich sinds 2010 op voorbeeldige wijze van hun taak gekweten bij de bescherming en het management van de universele waarden van de Grachtengordel. Dit is onder meer tot uiting gekomen in de aanpassingen van het beleid voor buitenreclame in de Grachtengordel op verzoek van het Werelderfgoedcomité, het opstellen van een hoogbouwvisie, het Binnenstadoffensief, het Aanvalsplan Schoon Amsterdam en de tweejaarlijkse monitoring van ontwikkelingen in het werelderfgoed.

Ook de wijze waarop in het planproces over de ontwikkeling van woningbouw in de Sluisbuurt met de uitzonderlijke universele waarde van het werelderfgoed rekening is gehouden getuigt hiervan. Er is een Hoogbouw Effect-Rapportage (HER) uitgevoerd – die in dit geval als Heritage Impact Assessment kan worden beschouwd –, reacties van de siteholder en de dienst Monumenten & Archeologie zijn gevraagd en er heeft een publiek debat over de plannen plaatsgevonden. Op grond hiervan zijn de oorspronkelijke plannen aangepast.

Ik verzoek u op een vergelijkbaar zorgvuldige wijze bij de verdere planvorming en besluitvorming het belang van het werelderfgoed steeds in uw afwegingen te blijven betrekken. Graag verneem ik van u op welke wijze u hieraan invulling denkt te geven, zodat ik UNESCO hiervan op de hoogte kan stellen. Voorts verzoek ik u de onduidelijkheid weg te nemen die ICOMOS meent te hebben gelezen in de Hoogbouwvisie als zou hoogbouw binnen de begrenzing van het Werelderfgoed of zijn bufferzone zijn toegestaan.

Hoogachtend,
de minister van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap,
namens deze,
de Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed



drs. Cees van 't Veen
algemeen directeur

Bijlagen:

- brief CLT/HER/WHC/16/1349 van de directeur van het UNESCO Werelderfgoedcentrum, 11 september 2017
- ICOMOS technical review Amsterdam Canal Ring, september 2017

C.c.:

- Dagelijks Bestuur Stadsdeel Centrum, t.a.v. mw. J. van Pinxteren, Postbus 202, 1000 AE Amsterdam
- Directeur Monumenten & Archeologie, de heer A. Oxenaar, Postbus 10718, 1001 ES Amsterdam
- Directie Erfgoed en Kunsten, Ministerie van OCW, t.a.v. J. van den Boogert



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联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Culture Sector Division for Heritage

H. E. Mr Lionel Strengart Veer
Ambassador Extraordinary and
Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of
Netherlands
Permanent Delegation of
the Kingdom of the Netherlands to
UNESCO
UNESCO House

Ref.: CLT/HER/WHC/16/1349

11 Septembre 2017

Subject : **State of conservation of the World Heritage property “Seventeenth-Century Canal Ring Area of Amsterdam inside the Singelgracht”**

Dear Ambassador,

I wish to inform you that ICOMOS has reviewed the State of Conservation report and the updated information concerning the World Heritage Property “Seventeenth-Century Canal Ring Area of Amsterdam inside the Singelgracht” in the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

I would be grateful if you could share the enclosed ICOMOS technical review (Annex I) with your relevant national authorities for their consideration and keep the World Heritage Centre informed of ways by which these comments are being taken into account.

I take this opportunity to thank you for your continued cooperation and support in the implementation of the *World Heritage Convention*.

Please accept, dear Ambassador, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Mechtild Rössler
Director
World Heritage Centre

Enc.

cc: Netherlands National Commission for UNESCO
National Focal Points for World Heritage
ICOMOS International

ICOMOS Technical Review

Property	Seventeenth-century canal ring area of Amsterdam within Singelgracht
State Party	The Netherlands
Property ID	1349
Date inscription	2010
Criteria	(i)(ii)(iv)
Project	High-rise project “Sluisbuurt”

Background

On March 3rd 2017, following the information received from an Amsterdam newspaper reporter, the Director of the World Heritage Centre addressed a letter to the Permanent Delegate of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to UNESCO, asking the State Party to provide information on whether the new high-rise project “Sluisbuurt”, located in the vicinity of "Seventeenth-Century Canal Ring Area of Amsterdam inside the Singelgracht", could have a potential undesirable visual impact on the urban landscape of the World Heritage property.

To answer this request, the State Party transmitted the following publications and documents to the World Heritage Centre:

- 1- High-risers in Amsterdam,-Municipality of Amsterdam, June 2011
- 2- High-rise Impact Assessment for the Sluisbuurt 20, The City of Amsterdam’s Municipal Executive, May 2016
- 3- Letter of the Executive Board of the Centrum Borough, 15 February 2017
- 4- Report on building plans for “Sluisbuurt” and the State of Conservation of the Amsterdam Canal Ring Area, Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands and the City of Amsterdam, 2 May 2017.

1-High-risers in Amsterdam

The publication, after portraying the historical urban development of Amsterdam, discusses the general vision and the outline of the urban policy that the Municipality of Amsterdam intends to implement in respect to high-rise buildings in response to the increasing need of living and working space, in the framework of the planning document Structural Vision Amsterdam 2040. The document Structural Vision Amsterdam 2040 assumes the densification of the inner urban area while keeping open the metropolitan landscape, identifying the most important spatial developments for the core city of the metropolitan region in four major movements: the expansion of the central city area, the waterfront, the south flank and the metropolitan landscape.

The areas planned for development are defined as *"search areas"*, distinguished between *"Areas where high-risers are encouraged"* and *"Areas where high-risers are used with extreme reluctance"*.

As the inner city canals in Amsterdam have been incorporated in the UNESCO World Heritage List (Seventeenth-century canal ring area of Amsterdam within Singelgracht) since 2010, the policy on high-risers is protective for the area within the Singelgracht zone: *"an important aspect in the high-rise policy is the protection of the special qualities of the UNESCO area,....High-rise building plans within, but also outside the Singelgracht zone,*

which are visible from the 'World Heritage' area, must be assessed for their impact on the heritage area."

For this reason, a zone of 2 kilometres around the Singelgracht area has been established in the relevant chart. In this zone, high-rise construction is applied with restraint.

Under the section *"Areas where high-risers are used with extreme reluctance"*, the document reaffirms the protective principles concerning the UNESCO property:

"High-risers and the UNESCO area (core area and buffer zone)

An important aspect in the high-rise policy is the protection of the special qualities of the UNESCO area, cf. high-rise chart. A deviation in scale or impairment of fabric or typology is not acceptable here. In this area the maximum permitted height is medium-rise building, as well as taller constructions insofar as they fit within the current zoning plans, taking the relevant HER procedure into consideration.

High-rise building plans within, but also outside the Singelgracht zone, which are visible from the 'World Heritage' area, must be assessed for their impact on the heritage area. The starting point for this zone is that where the historical layered cityscape has 'grown' into a single mass, this may not be affected by new buildings which deviate in size and scale."
and

"A zone of 2 km around the UNESCO area (core area and buffer zone) has been taken up in the chart. High-risers are only permitted here if, amongst other things, the criteria regarding visibility have been complied with as described for that zone in the HER procedure (page 34)."

Under the section, *"Areas of special value"*, the document states:

All these areas of special value are situated within the 2 kilometres zone around the UNESCO World Heritage Site."

The publication also provides information on the instruments and procedure adopted by the policy to assess the impact of the planned high-rise buildings on the urban and natural landscape.

The policy document indicates at what stage the city's Municipal Executive must be involved in the assessment of high-rise building plans, and includes the assessment framework of the structural vision for high-risers.

As long as a high-rise building plan does not deviate from the assessment framework of the structural vision, no recommendation is necessary. Only when there's a deviation from the assessment framework, must the relevant urban district draw up a portion of the High-rise Impact Assessment (abbreviated by the Dutch acronym HER), nominally the so-called "blending in with the landscape" section.

On the basis of the assessment of the blending in with the landscape, the Spatial Planning Department (DRO) and the Office of Monuments & Archaeology (BMA) evaluate the high-riser initiative and provide a recommendation to the Municipal Executive. Should the DRO/BMA provide a negative recommendation, the Municipal Executive is authorised to request the relevant urban district to adapt the zoning plan or project decision in which the high-riser initiative is incorporated.

The document recalls that undertaking a High-riser Impact Assessment (HER) is recommended at all times, but it is mandatory in the following case:

- High-rise initiatives higher than 30 metres, or twice the height of those in their direct vicinity, within the 2 km zone around the UNESCO area indicated on the high-rise chart.

The HER may contain surveys concerning: Blending in with the landscape; Blending in with the urban fabric; blending in with the urban development structure, particularly where it concerns culture historical values; Consequences of the height restrictions due to Schiphol, radio wave transmission paths and transmitter stations.

2-High-rise Impact Assessment for the Sluisbuurt -20 May 2016

The planned tower-block construction in the Sluisbuurt, which should provide between 3500 and 5500 residential units, is located at the tip of Zeeburgereiland in the Amsterdam borough of Oost (East), between the city centre and the watery countryside.

The programme foresees the construction of buildings adjacent to the landscape, the height of which should be limited to 30 metres, with some buildings up to 60 metres serving as accents. Taller buildings at junctions should complete the skyline.

This High-Rise Impact Assessment (HER) evaluates the effects of the planned project on the urban landscape when observed from the central city area and from the surrounding metropolitan landscape.

After recalling the structuring principles and instruments of the spatial planning policy of the Structural Vision Amsterdam 2040 document, the publication notes that:

"The high-rise plan preserves the central city area bounded by the Singelgracht canal but protects the metropolitan landscape to a lesser degree."

and that

"The [Sluisbuurt] project is being evaluated for its impact on the UNESCO-designated area, although the Sluisbuurt is situated outside the 2km buffer zone (circled in red on the map)."

Moreover it considers that:

"The towers' impact on the inner city will be comparable to that of the Rembrandt Tower, with the perspective created by the ca. 2 km distance causing them to appear less tall. Where high-rise location search areas fall within the 2km buffer zone around the UNESCO area, applicable conditions will obtain."

The publication contains a fragment of the *"High-rise assessment map, High-risers in Amsterdam (2011)"* on page 18, on which the search areas are marked.

The final section of the publication provides a set of 36 images shot from vantage points around the Sluisbuurt illustrating the current state of the natural and urban landscape as well as their future appearance after the construction of the planned development.

3- Letter of the Executive Board of the Centrum Borough, date 15 February 2017

Re: Sluisbuurt urban development plan draft and High-Rise Impact Assessment (HIA) and their implications for the UNESCO World Heritage canal ring area.

The letter expresses its deep concern about the potential negative impact of the planned development on the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage property:

"The Sluisbuurt HIA shows that the high-rises in the plan would visually disrupt the sight lines down Herengracht from Utrechtsestraat and, even more markedly, from the more

easterly bridges at the Amstel River and Weesperstraat. They would therefore violate the essential qualities of the Canal Ring, with its unobstructed views towards the IJ".

In particular the letter expresses the opinion of the Planning and Sustainability department and the Monuments and Archaeology department on the non-conformity of the planned development to the city high-rise policy:

"The Executive Board has studied the Planning and Sustainability department and Monuments and Archaeology department's advice on the HIA, which concludes that the planned high-rise construction in the Sluisbuurt does not conform to the City of Amsterdam's high-rise policy and the requirements it must meet to maintain UNESCO status. Planning and Sustainability observes that the planned construction described in the Sluisbuurt HIA deviates from the city's high-rise policy in several respects".

The letter therefore concludes:

"As the site holder for the Canal Ring UNESCO World Heritage area, the Executive Board is therefore deeply concerned about the negative effects the planned high-rise construction would have on the World Heritage site."

and

"We therefore request that in your decision with respect to the draft of the Sluisbuurt urban development plan you take into account the results of the Sluisbuurt HER and modify the high-rise buildings in the plan in such a manner that it complies with the city's current high-rise policy."

4-Report on building plans for "Sluisbuurt" and the State of Conservation of the Amsterdam Canal Ring Area established by the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands and the City of Amsterdam.

After providing a general description of the Sluisbuurt area and of the planned intervention, the report recalls the motivations and the principles of the policy on high-rise buildings in Amsterdam.

The section "Current status: amended Urban Development Plan and subsequent administrative decision-making", notes that the City of Amsterdam's Municipal Executive has released the draft Sluisbuurt Urban Development Plan (which includes the aforementioned HIA) in November 2016 for public comment.

The City of Amsterdam and the Borough of Amsterdam Centre, the latter as the site holder of the World Heritage property, have submitted an official response which makes clear that the high-rises would have an undesirable impact on the World Heritage property.

The head of the Department of Planning and Sustainability and the head of the Department of Monuments and Archaeology of the City of Amsterdam, and the site holder, the Borough of Amsterdam Centre, are of the opinion that the high-risers proposed in the original draft Sluisbuurt Urban Development Plan do not comply with the City's high-rise policy as an elaboration of Structural Vision Amsterdam 2040 in those instances in which they are visible from the World Heritage property.

Following the public discussion concerning high-risers in the city and in the Sluisbuurt area, the Sluisbuurt Urban Development Plan is now being amended.

The text and the composite photographs included in the final part of the report explain which changes are being considered. Buildings in the sightlines from the Herengracht Canal (numbers 2 and 4 on the map) are to be lowered: building no.2 from 132 m to 125 m and building no. 4 from 135 m to 105 m.

These height adaptations should be incorporated into the amended Urban Development Plan.

The head of the Department of Planning and Sustainability and the head of the Department of Monuments and Archaeology of the City of Amsterdam have been asked to issue a supplementary opinion on the considered amendments, before the Municipal Executive submits the Sluisbuurt Urban Development Plan to the municipal's council.

Conclusions

The HER is the procedure to assess the impact of the planned high-rise building on the urban and natural landscape. The composite photographs shot from vantage points around the new development area constitute the essential tools on which is based the HER assessment concerning the blending in of the planned project with the surrounding landscape.

The composite photographs shot from vantage points around the Sluisbuurt and contained in the publications - "*High-risers in Amsterdam*" and "*High-rise Impact Assessment for the Sluisbuurt*" as well as in the report "*Report on building plans for Sluisbuurt and the State of Conservation of the Amsterdam Canal Ring Area*" illustrate the current state of the natural and urban landscape, as well the potential visual impact that the Sluisbuurt development could have, if implemented, on the country landscape as well as on the urban skyline when observed from within the World Heritage property "Seventeenth-century canal ring area of Amsterdam within Singelgracht".

ICOMOS considers that the reduced scale of the images attached to the publications provided by the State Party does not allow the evaluation, in the context of this technical review, of the extent of the impact of the planned development on the views of the urban skyline when observed from inside the property.

ICOMOS brings to the State Party's attention that some factors, such as the position of the sun, the quality of the air, the façade building materials, and the location from which the photographs are shot, may influence the natural view as well as the photographic reproduction.

ICOMOS suggests that the State Party be requested to prepare Heritage Impact Assessments to be carried out to consider the impact on the attributes of Outstanding Universal Value, something the other assessments do not examine, relying instead on purely visual measures.

ICOMOS supports the request of the Executive Board of the Centrum Borough addressed to the Municipal Executive City Hall by letter, dated 15 February 2017, to modify the planned development and recalls that the conservation of cultural heritage assets' significance is a supporting factor for sustainable economic development.

Therefore ICOMOS suggests that the Municipal Executive City Hall of Amsterdam be strongly encouraged to take action in order to amend the Urban Development Plan so as to avoid any undesirable impact on the World Heritage property's Outstanding Universal Value.

Finally, ICOMOS, well aware that the provided documents constitute only informative publications, while the texts of the ruling urban prescriptions are encoded in the document Structural Vision Amsterdam 2040, would suggest that the competent authorities provide to the World Heritage Centre information on the physical extension of the "Singelgracht zone",

as the phrase at page 30 of the publication *High Risers in Amsterdam*: "*High-rise building plans within, but also outside the Singelgracht zone, which are visible from the 'World Heritage' area, must be assessed for their impact on the heritage area*" may let suppose that High risers could be admitted within the World Heritage property.

Moreover, the following indicates that high-risers are planned in the Overhoeks area, which is only about 1 km away from the World Heritage property's boundary:

From "*High Risers in Amsterdam*":

- "*Fragment of high-rise assessment map, High-risers in Amsterdam (2011)* (page 18);
- "*Map structural vision Amsterdam 2040, High-risers and the expansion of the central city area*" (page 30);
- the phrase "*The high-rise strip at Overhoeks, at a height of up to 120 metres marks the cape in the IJ...*" (page 22).

From "*High-rise Impact Assessment for the Sluisbuurt*":

- "*Map fragment from high rise plan section, structural Vision Amsterdam 2040* (page 10);
- "*Map fragment from 2040 waterfront plan section, Structural Vision Amsterdam 2040*" (page 16);
- the phrase "*Like a promontory on the IJ, the Overhoeks high-rise strip, with buildings up to 120 metres*" (page 17).

ICOMOS considers that the State Party be invited to inform the World Heritage Centre as to whether the relevant HER assessments concerning these high rise buildings have been established.

ICOMOS remains at the disposal of the State Party for further clarification on the above or assistance as required.

ICOMOS, Charenton-le-Pont
September 2017