

GUIDELINES FOR THE DEFINITION OF BOUNDARIES FOR CANDIDATE WORLD HERITAGE SITES

(By ICOMOS-UK (2001)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 World Heritage Sites have to meet the criteria for 'outstanding universal significance' laid down in the Operational Guidelines for the *Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (UNESCO/World Heritage Committee 1999). They must therefore be defined in a way that protects this significance from threat.

1.2 In practical terms, World Heritage Sites must also be manageable. Boundaries drawn too broadly as well as too tightly can make this difficult. Very tight boundaries are a feature of a number of the existing UK World Heritage Sites. As a result, there have been problems about developments proposed close to Sites, but outside the defined boundaries. On the other hand, boundaries drawn too loosely can be equally problematic in lessening awareness of the significance of the Site and bringing into play extraneous issues which are not directly relevant to the essential values of the Site.

1.3 A further issue is the requirement of the *Operational Guidelines* (para 17) to consider the need for buffer zones to protect World Heritage Sites.

1.4 The essential prerequisites of the boundaries both of the Sites themselves, and of any buffer zone, is that they must protect the World Heritage values of the Site in question. It is essential, therefore, that any definition of boundaries is based on as full as possible an understanding and description of the Site. Good knowledge of the Site, based on up-to-date research, is absolutely essential to define adequately its boundaries.

2. DEFINITION OF BOUNDARIES FOR WORLD HERITAGE SITES

2.1 Beyond the basic understanding of the significance of the Site, the boundaries of the Site should be based on the following criteria:

(1) The Site boundary should include all those elements of the Site which contribute to its outstanding universal significance, above or below ground. The potential significance of landscape as opposed to individual structures should be borne in mind.

(2) Site boundaries should be based on a thorough understanding and knowledge of the sites concerned. Components of each site should demonstrate the relevant functional or other significant characteristics of buildings and landscape contributing to the outstanding universal significance of the Site.

(3) Complex sites and landscapes should be delineated as far as possible according to extant archaeological or historical topography derived from, and

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exemplifying, the reasons for which the Site is judged to be significant.

(4) Individual components should be demonstrably authentic. Tests of authenticity should be applied in relationship to the archaeological or historical evolution and continued use (when appropriate), with particular regard for either archaeological or architectural integrity of form and landscape. In the case of archaeological sites, the outward appearance of individual structures may not reflect their overall significance.

(5) For ease of management, Sites should be defined as far as possible to coincide with existing or proposed statutory and other formal designations or administrative boundaries, where these are relevant to the criteria for nomination. Proposed boundaries should take account of ownership and the eventual requirements for consultation, but should omit any contiguous zones of different character, or significant areas where the character and integrity has been lost or degraded. As far as possible Sites should be defined as single entities.

(6) In formulating proposals for Site boundaries, the relevant authorities should also review, and if necessary revise statutory and planning protection.

3 BUFFER ZONES

- 3.1 *The Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (UNESCO/World Heritage Committee 1999) require the provision of a 'buffer zone' whenever one is necessary to ensure the proper conservation of a World Heritage Site (para 17). This is defined as an area surrounding the Site which has restrictions placed on its use to give an added layer of protection.
- 3.2 In each case, the decision on whether or not there should be a buffer zone will depend on the extent to which events outside the boundary of the Site proper can impact adversely (generally visually or environmentally) on the World Heritage values of the Site itself. This analysis should be the first step in the process.
- 3.3 The nature, size and shape of any buffer zone should as far as possible follow existing (or proposed) statutory and other formal designations or administrative boundaries. Proposals should take account of ownership and the eventual requirement for consultation. As far as possible, buffer zones should be defined as single entities.
- 3.4 In defining buffer zones, the relevant authorities must review, and if necessary revise appropriate statutory or planning provisions to give effect to them.