

ICOMOS Technical Review

Property	The Naval Port of Karlskrona
State Party	Sweden
Property ID	871
Date of inscription	1998
Criteria	(ii)(iv)
Project	Construction of a new Culture House in the main square Stortorget

Background

This Technical Review addresses a revised project for Construction of a new cultural arts centre: 'Culture House' at the main square Stortorget within the World Heritage property, The Naval Port of Karlskrona, based on information provided to ICOMOS on 22 June and 18 July 2022 via the World Heritage Centre, following an online briefing from the State Party to ICOMOS and the World Heritage Centre on 26 June 2022.

In June and November 2020, ICOMOS had received information from the State Party, via the World Heritage Centre, in relation to the subject project, which involves proposed demolition of a former post office and construction of a new cultural arts centre within the boundaries of the property, at the edge of the main square Stortorget.

ICOMOS provided an initial Technical Review of the project dated February 2021, based on the documentation provided in 2020. That Technical Review considered that the project would have a negative impact on attributes which support the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, particularly in relation to authenticity (well preserved historic buildings, monuments and settings and the main square Stortorget as a public space) and integrity (historic townscape and well preserved historic town plan and structures), and concluded:

ICOMOS suggests that the State Party reconsider the situation and restart the planning process of a Cultural Arts Centre, taking into account the property's Outstanding Universal Value, the historic layers of the place and the scale of buildings at the square.

During this process, the State Party should:

- take into account the post office as a starting point for development;*
- form a dialogue between old and new;*
- add a positive layer and dialogue of continuity in the form of setting, scale, materials and colour; and*
- carry out the project as an inclusive process with all the stakeholders involved.*

The Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property is recalled at Annexure A.

Documents Considered

The current Technical Review is based upon the following documents:

A revised proposal for the new Cultural Arts Center (Stortorget 1906, kvarteret Sjöstjerna) by Dorte Mandrup and the Municipality of Karlskrona. 8.4.2022

Heritage Impact Assessment. Karlskrona Culture House. 31.5.2022. Nyréns Arkitektkontor.

Revision of the project

Following the initial ICOMOS Technical Review, the design proposal has been revised. The revision has occurred in collaboration with the Municipality of Karlskrona and architect Dorte Mandrup.

The changes made, seek to address the concerns regarding the height, external finishes, and contrast with the surrounding historic environment. The northern façade, facing the square and the churches, has been lowered by 1.3 metres (from 25.8 to 24.5 metres). The volumes of the southern elements have been lowered for a better transition between the proposed building and the smaller scale of the buildings to the south. External finishes façade materials have been adjusted. Cornices has been added that use the same type of sandstone used in the churches, while the rest of the proposed façade remains clad with ceramic tiles that contrast with the sandstone details while retaining the same colour. The colour palette and use of project specific high-quality materials aim to comply with the attribute the main square as a public space; the updated façade alludes to the public buildings around the square, both the baroque churches as well as the concert house and library but separates itself from the darker palettes of the adjacent non-public housing buildings.

Using the Golden Section as a principle, the volume has been adapted inspired by the baroque churches, while retaining a contemporary expression. The added horizontal cornice separating the two floors aligns with the cornices of Fredrickschurch and the Holy Trinity Church. The aim of this change is to comply with the attribute settings by lessening the contrast of the volume against the churches yet adding a new layer to the historically diverse main square.



Fredrickschurch and proposed Karlskrona Culture House viewed across the main square Stortorget, Reproduced from: HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT Karlskrona culture house - presentation 220626, Nyréns Arkitektkontor.

the cityscape and the associations the building may give residents and former users of the building's previous functions . . .

*. . . Since the façade towards the square is the part of the building that still has some of the original character, retaining the façade has been considered at an early stage. **This idea has however been rejected by the project group for architectural and cultural-historical reasons** (emphasis added).*

In relation to the Stortorget square, the HIA report indicates:

*The grandeur of Stortorget with the monumental character of the surrounding buildings is sensitive to additions or changes that reduce the grand openness of the square. In the case of new development, public buildings or other open and accessible buildings should be prioritized around Stortorget over, for example, residential buildings. **New buildings around the square should be designed with a high architectural ambition and scale wise subordinate themselves to the churches and the town hall** (emphasis added).*

The HIA report provides the following comment as part of the summary discussion of heritage impact:

An iconic building such as a culture house requires a certain amount of architectural expression, especially when the municipality is the developer (the latter is specified in the national architectural policy Prop.) . . .

*. . . The revised set out to lower the height of the building as much as possible without sacrificing the fundamental architectural idea. The revised proposal is at a point where further major revisions might distort the fundamental design. As stated in the technical review, ICOMOS considers that the positive impacts of the activation and cultural use of the site cannot outweigh negative impacts on OUV. **However, a building containing the functions that a culture house requires, in an architecturally interesting shape, and at a vacant plot in the central part of the city will most definitely entail some adverse impact on the OUV.** The existing building has not been deemed essential for retaining the OUV by the County Administrative Board or ICOMOS, and the building is currently not fit for use without extensive remediation and reconstruction. These actions could be difficult to justify on the basis that the cultural-historical values of the building are only manifested in its façade facing the square, while the building otherwise has limited values. A replacement of the building is therefore highly likely. The in-depth knowledge base for the national interest states that "when adding new buildings to the square, public buildings or other open and accessible buildings should be prioritised around Stortorget over e.g. residential buildings. **New buildings around the square should be designed with a high level of architectural ambition and subordinate to the churches and the former Town Hall in scale.** This guideline is well in line with the attributes interpreted out of the RsoOUV document, with the addition that a new building could potentially strengthen the Baroque features of the city plan as well as Stortorget as a public space (emphasis added).*

. . . Ultimately, however, it may be necessary to balance the public benefit of the proposed change against the harm to the place.

The HIA concludes that:

The relevant decision makers must decide if it is possible for the project to move forward in its current direction, as well as if it is in accordance with the relevant laws that regulate heritage aspects. If this is not possible, the process should be restarted.

ICOMOS Comments

The revised Cultural Arts Center-project dated 8 April 2022 does not adequately address the recommendations from the February 2021 ICOMOS Technical Review.

Concerning the Post Office, it does not appear from the HIA, or from the briefing provided to ICOMOS, that the design review process has taken into account the post office as a 'starting point'. There are no studies or other indications of attempts to retain and adapt all or part of this building, but rather an indication that extensive works would be needed, and an assertion that any form of retention was rejected for unspecified architectural and cultural-historical reasons.

ICOMOS considers that while demolition of the Post Office would have only a minor negative impact on the authenticity and integrity of the property and its retention is not essential to the property's OUV, it is regrettable that there does not appear to have been more serious consideration of its retention and adaptation.

The HIA methodology and approach generally follows the 2011 *ICOMOS Guidance on Heritage Impact Assessments for Cultural World Heritage Properties*, but is supported by more detailed analysis of attributes including the evolution of the city, Stortorget square and historic representations of the Karlskrona skyline. The summary tables showing conclusions about heritage impact are high level.

ICOMOS concurs with the analysis and gradings assigned to the following attributes:

- The continuity of the naval base
- Well-kept buildings and historic environments
- Location
- Preserved city block structure
- The clear demarcation of the historic city.

ICOMOS considers that the grading assigned to the following attribute is appropriate, but that further improvement is possible and would be desirable:

- Historic city silhouette.

ICOMOS does not agree with the analysis and gradings assigned to the following attributes:

- Stortorget as a public space
- Forms and designs, materials and substances.

Historic City Silhouette

The lowering of the proposed building from 25.8 m to 24.5m is an improvement, as shown in the detailed analysis of photographs and graphic presentation in the HIA. Although ICOMOS acknowledges that the visibility of the proposed building within the historic city skyline would not be a reason to prevent it proceeding, the opportunity could and should be taken to lower the proposed structure further. This would further address the finding from the 2021 ICOMOS Technical Review that: *The vertically large structure in the very vicinity of Fredrickschurch would have a negative impact on the historic structures, and would also adversely affect the traditional historic small-scale buildings and the dialogue between the historic blocks and the public space.*

Stortorget as a public space

The lowering of the southern elements has improved the transition between the proposed building and the smaller scale buildings to the south. However, the proposed building would still be highly visible within Stortorget and its scale and dramatically different form and predominant façade materials would create a visual dominance that would in turn lessen the prominence and demean the visual setting of the surrounding buildings, and in particular Fredrickschurch. The overall effect of the proposed building would reduce the historical integrity of the Stortorget, notwithstanding that the Post Office may be perceived as a negative element in its current degraded state. Therefore, ICOMOS assesses the impact as 'slight and negative' rather than 'moderate/ large and positive' as presented in

the HIA. Furthermore, these adverse effects on Stortorget as a public space could be addressed by changes to the building form and façade materials.

Form and design, materials and finishes

The building form, and especially the dramatic scalloped roof profile, which has not been altered in the revised proposal, remains problematic and continues to be inconsistent with and unsympathetic to, the more regular forms of surrounding public buildings. While a new form could be successful, the proposed building inappropriately juxtaposes with, rather than complementing, the surrounding precinct. As noted in the 2021 ICOMOS Technical Review: *The building shape conflicts with the more traditional and regular forms of the surrounding historic buildings and would change the historic townscape and the structures of the historic town plan in the very core of the 17th century town.* This remains the case with the revised proposal.

The proposed colour palette appropriately reflects the public buildings in the vicinity. The introduction of proposed sandstone cornices improves the visual relationship to nearby buildings, including Fredrickschurch, but the impact of the introduced stone elements, and their articulation, are compromised by their intersection with and interruption by fenestration and they are of insufficient scale and prominence to achieve the stated intent of alluding to the public buildings around the square.

The façade remains clad with ceramic tiles that contrast with the sandstone details while retaining the same colour. However, in combination with the proposed built form, these tiles still contrast too greatly with the materials palette in the surrounding precinct. As noted in the 2021 ICOMOS Technical Review: *The proposed external finishes and appearance are inconsistent and too-contrasting with the more traditional and regular forms of the surrounding historic urban environment.* This remains the case with the revised proposal.

ICOMOS does not accept the assertion presented in the HIA that: *a building containing the functions that a culture house requires, in an architecturally interesting shape, and at a vacant plot in the central part of the city will most definitely entail some adverse impact on the OUV.* ICOMOS advises that although the proposal is unacceptable in its current form, this is a suitable location for the proposed use, and a building which more substantively addresses the concerns about height, form and facade materials expressed both above, and in the 2021 ICOMOS Technical Review, would be appropriate for the site and could accommodate the necessary culture house functions. The problem is not the culture house 'brief', it is that the revised design does not adequately address the ICOMOS recommendations nor give adequate priority to retention of those attributes which support and convey the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, consistent with the obligations of the State Party under the *World Heritage Convention*.

Despite the minor lowering of the height of the building and the revision of external finishes façade materials the originally proposed architectural design of the proposed Culture Art Centre has not been sufficiently adjusted to reflect the concerns identified in the 2021 ICOMOS Technical Review. The alterations in the current project design are minor and the architectural design remains too intrusive to this sensitive historic urban context. It is a dominant building at the square and thus there is a lack of mutual dialogue with the historic square, between old and new.

ICOMOS Conclusions and Recommendations

The proposed Culture House project at Karlskrona should not proceed with its current form and design.

ICOMOS therefore re-iterates its 2021 recommendation that: *the State Party reconsider the situation and restart the planning process of a Cultural Arts Centre, taking into account the property's Outstanding Universal Value, the historic layers of the place and the scale of buildings at the square.*

The form and materials and design of the proposed Cultural Arts Centre require substantial revision. The proposed design does not meet the requirements of new "infill" construction in the historic setting at the square.

While retention of the Post Office is not essential to the property's Outstanding Universal Value, it is regrettable that there does not appear to have been more serious consideration of its retention and adaptation.

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

ICOMOS, Charenton-le-Pont
August, 2022

Annexure: Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV)

The retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value for the property was adopted by the World Heritage Committee in 2016 (40 COM 8E).

Brief synthesis

The Naval Port of Karlskrona, a serial property situated on a Baltic Sea archipelago in south-eastern Sweden, is an extremely well-preserved example of a naval city from a time when major European powers secured their positions largely through war and battles at sea. Founded in 1680 by King Karl XI and planned from the outset as a naval city, Karlskrona was built as a new base for the fleet of Sweden, a major power at that time. The city was designed by quartermaster General Erik Dahlbergh in a grid plan with Baroque features, and included the complete range of necessary functions: naval base facilities, military fortifications and defences, a shipyard, a civil city with trade and administration, supply areas, areas for provisions, and residential areas for groups from various levels of society. The city's architects and planners were inspired by precedents such as the Venetian Arsenal, the French naval city of Rochefort, and the English city of Chatham. Karlskrona in turn influenced subsequent naval bases and cities of this type.

In addition to the city's grid plan and built infrastructure, the serial property includes large parts of the island of Trossö, where the naval base and many of its environments and buildings are located; a number of inner and outer fortifications that surround Trossö, which were intended to defend the city and the naval base; as well as Skärfva Manor House and the Crown Mill at Lyckeby, satellites within this larger area that are representative of the hinterland. The Naval Port of Karlskrona, which includes installations that illustrate its subsequent development up to the present day, is the best preserved and most complete of the surviving European naval cities. This is partly because it has not been affected by wars or battles, and partly because it continues to operate as a naval base.

Criterion (ii): *Karlskrona is an exceptionally well preserved example of a European planned naval town, which incorporates elements derived from earlier establishments in other countries and which was in its turn to serve as the model for subsequent towns with similar functions.*

Criterion (iv): *Naval bases played an important role in the centuries during which naval power was a determining factor in European Realpolitik, and Karlskrona is the best preserved and most complete of those that survive.*

Integrity

All the elements necessary to express the Outstanding Universal Value of the Naval Port of Karlskrona are located within the boundaries of the 320.417-ha serial property, including the city of Karlskrona and its grid plan; the naval dockyard and harbour; the inner fortifications at Ljungskär, Mjölнарholmen, Koholmen, Godnatt, and Kurrholmen; the outer fortifications at Drottningkärs Citadel and Kungsholms Fort; and Skärfva Manor House and the Crown Mill at Lyckeby located in the naval port's environs. The boundaries of the property adequately ensure the complete representation of the features and processes that convey the property's significance, and there is a 1,105.077-ha buffer zone. The property does not suffer unduly from adverse effects of development and/or neglect. While the city plan is preserved and the original vision for and planned functions of the city are still legible today, the majority of the property is part of a living urban environment facing continual pressures for change.

Authenticity

The Naval Port of Karlskrona is authentic in terms of its location and setting, forms and designs, and materials and substances, as well as some of its uses and functions. Various kinds of cultural

environments as well as individual buildings are largely preserved. In 2005, when Karlskrona became Sweden's national marine port, its role as an active naval port was strengthened. The Swedish authorities believe that the continued use of this historical environment will provide the best protection, and will assist in maintaining the property's authenticity. Several older buildings and constructions in the port area have been restored in order that they may be reused.

Protection and management requirements

The serial property of the Naval Port of Karlskrona consists of ten components, within which a total of 91 buildings are protected under the Swedish Ordinance for State-owned Listed Buildings. An additional 47 areas with buildings are protected by the Historic Environment Act (1988:950). (Each listing can comprise a number of buildings.) The property is also designated as an Area of National Interest and its cultural environment is protected under the Swedish Environmental Code. Karlskrona Municipality is responsible for preserving the values of this area through physical planning pursuant to the Planning and Building Act (1987). The Blekinge County Administrative Board has supervisory authority over this property. In this role, it is responsible for protecting the attributes that express the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage property by ensuring that the values of the Area of National Interest are not tangibly damaged. The Board may issue statements in this respect when, for instance, Karlskrona Municipality's detailed plans are circulated for consultation. Actions taken outside the defined Area of National Interest must also ensure that this area's values are maintained. The Naval Port of Karlskrona is included in the Blekinge Archipelago Biosphere Reserve (UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme, declared in 2011).

The serial property is owned and/or managed by a combination of public and private concerns. The Swedish Fortification Agency owns and maintains buildings and objects in the military area used by the Swedish Armed Forces, and the National Property Board owns and maintains a number of buildings, including the Drottningstads Citadell. Both owners have long-term conservation plans. The Parish of Karlskrona manages two of the three church buildings; the Municipality of Karlskrona manages the Crown Mill at Lyckeby; and private stakeholders own the Kungshall Storehouse and Skärfva Manor House, among other components. The Blekinge County Administrative Board awards grants for the conservation of privately owned listed buildings. Their maintenance is carried out under the supervision of experts in heritage conservation. A management plan adopted in 2005 and revised in 2009 aims to preserve and develop the Naval Port of Karlskrona.

But because an evaluation of older plans has only just begun, the cultural values in large parts of the World Heritage property are currently not safeguarded. This is evident in regard to the rebuilding of certain protected buildings and in decisions involving newly declared listed buildings. Extensive new construction has taken place in some areas, and additional construction is planned within central parts of the World Heritage property.

Sustaining the Outstanding Universal Value of the property over time will require further protecting its attributes and reformulating the present management plan to ensure that these attributes are managed appropriately in the context of the ongoing development of the city and the continual pressures for change that face this living urban environment.