



City of Westminster

Minutes

Date: **19 October 2017**

Meeting: **Westminster World Heritage Site Steering Group**

Attendees:

- Cllr Robert Davis, Westminster City Council – Chair**
- Tessa Blundy, Parliamentary Estates Directorate**
- Juliet West, ICOMOS UK**
- Enid Williams, DCMS**
- Keith Nichol DCMS**
- Tony Thompson, DCLG**
- Andy Bramwell Cabinet Office**
- Tessa Blundy Parliamentary Estates**
- Elizabeth Venning Parliamentary Estates**
- Ptolemy Dean, Westminster Abbey**
- Chris Silcock, Westminster School**
- David English Historic England**
- Henry Owen John Historic England**
- Doug Black, LB Lambeth**
- Barry Sellars, LB Wandsworth**
- Michael Tsoukaris, LB Southwark**
- Elliot Kemp GLA**
- Shelly Gould GLA**
- Edmund Bird TFL heritage Advisor**
- Mike Turner, Royal Parks**
- Robert Ayton, WCC**
- John Walker, WCC**
- Jane Hamilton, WCC**

Contact:

If you have any questions regarding these minutes please contact:

Jane Hamilton
Tel: 020 7641 8019
Email: jhamilton@westminster.gov.uk

Welcome / Format and Purpose of Meeting

Cllr Robert Davis welcomed the group including new attendees and noted that Enid Williams has taken over from Hannah Jones as the main point of contact on World Heritage matters at DCMS.

It was noted that while the committee decision has not listed Westminster on the World Heritage List in Danger at this time, significant concerns remain and it will be important to ensure progress is being made in addressing the 23 recommendations made by the Mission visitors.

At the meeting recommendations were reviewed one by one to identify the lead(s) in responding to each issue. It was agreed that identified lead(s) should prepare a short written statement setting out a response to recommendations including any actions undertaken to address these prior to the next meeting.

WCC will then coordinate these responses and combine these to create a report setting out draft responses which will be circulated prior to the next meeting on **March 14th 2018**. That report can be considered and agreed at the steering group and provided to DCMS to incorporate within a letter/update to the World Heritage Centre. DCMS stressed the importance of this and that it is too long to wait until the next State of Conservation Report before providing an update.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Awareness materials should be developed to provide all stakeholders in the process with more information about the World Heritage Convention, and in particular, the concept of Outstanding Universal Value. These materials should be widely distributed, and an emphasis should be given to the management and protection aspects of OUV.

The Mission had shown there are varying degrees of understanding of what OUV means. HE as advisor to DCLG and DCMS felt it was primarily their role to lead on advising this, they are considering ways to deepen understanding of OUV including piloting HELM courses in January to raise awareness. HE with DCMS/ DCLG to prepare something on this for the formal response to be circulated at next meeting.

Recommendation 2: Policy and guidance materials should be written in as concrete a manner as possible to reduce the possibility for interpretation in a way that is not consistent with the protection of OUV. Steps have been taken in recent years to do so, but the disconnect between the words within the policies and the results on the ground still remains large enough for concern

Noted that boroughs are all drafting/ reviewing local plans and this needs to form part of consideration but that the GLA has significant role to play in London Plan review. GLA indicated that the new draft London Plan will be published on 29th November and they are seeking to integrate more in relation to World Heritage Sites within this. HE noted that this is important but it is also about making existing policies work properly, this links to recommendation 13 and work on 3D modelling. GLA will draft wording on progress for response for next meeting.

Recommendation 3: The State Party should consider revising its planning and policy documents to ensure that the protection of OUV is given the maximum weight possible when balancing the harm to the heritage vs. the potential benefit. These policies should continue to emphasise sustainable development approaches to development at World Heritage properties and their settings. But, as a first principle, these developments should have as a centrepiece, a requirement for protection of OUV.

DCLG are undertaking NPPF review, but noted that government understands what OUV is, the NPPF already mentions OUV, and pointed out the NPPG section on World Heritage Sites is available but they will take this away and consider whether further input needed, linking to Recommendation 1 and 2. HE /DCMS to discuss reviewing this with them and ways of improving understanding of OUV. DCLG/DCMS will prepare something on this for response the next meeting.

Recommendation 4: Properties recognized as World Heritage (whose preservation and safeguarding is subject of an international treaty signed at State Party level) should enjoy a *special status in regard to decision-making at all levels*. There is a need for a widening cooperation in the decision-making process, using synergetic capacities among the boroughs, supported by coordination at the level of the Greater London Authority. It should play a much larger role in determining consent when there is a potential for negative impact on the OUV of a property in accordance with the London plan and other policy and guidance documents at the city level.

Recent decisions, GLA had been as identified lead for this, although this relates to decision making at all levels. GLA noted that there is already established procedure/ process in place they will provide wording detailing these processes for the response.

Recommendation 5: The national government should consider calling in every planning application that has a potential to impact negatively on the OUV of a World Heritage property. In this regard, the advice of Historic England should be given a strong weight in determining when to call in an application. In this way, the obligations of the United Kingdom under the World Heritage Convention can be met more effectively than is currently the case

It was suggested that one possibility would be that when HE are objecting, government should call in applications. DCLG indicated that they were not going to go that far but can review and provide some response to this setting out what process/ criteria are. This also links to Recommendation 6 and 15.

Recommendation 6: Historic England should be given a stronger role at all levels to give advice on development projects. The organization already does play a significant role, but its advice is sometimes not given the necessary weight when difficult development decisions are taken. **Recommendation 15:** The advice of the national heritage advisor, Historic England, should be given a much greater weight by all of the boroughs and other levels of decision-making when evaluating projects and their potential impact on OUV. An objection by Historic England should already be a warning sign to the whole chain of decision-making that there will likely be issues at the World Heritage level.

Noted that recommendation 15 is very similar to recommendation 6 and both have been combined here for one response. It was noted that this recommendation is for HE and those to whom they provide advice to. Everybody needs to make sure HE is given appropriate weight. It was suggested that it may help for HE to map how it gets involved/ when they are engaged in the process. DCMS will lead in providing feedback on this for response.

Recommendation 7: Creative means should be explored with the World Heritage Centre and Advisory Bodies to minimize the impact of non-complimentary timeframes for commenting on and consenting to development proposals.

It was felt that it is not possible or desirable for the World Heritage Centre to comment on everything. DCMS indicated that there is a constant dialogue with the committee, and we can submit documents to them at any time, but committee only meets once a year for formal view of the committee.

The Abbey noted that there is no guidance for applicants on how to have a dialogue with UNESCO/ at what stage in the process. It is not clear what the process is, should London boroughs be consulting ICOMOS? HE said that the filter for consultation should be through them. It was agreed that there is a need to set out in a best practice note what process/ requirements are/ triggers for consulting, making judgment on when to consult, taking balanced approach to when to consult. HE as advisors will have a go at producing a side of A4 setting out the process. It was noted that this is at least in part up to the World Heritage Centre to resolve. DCMS will be in dialogue with them and provide a response on this for next meeting.

Recommendation 8: The new management plan for the World Heritage property, which is in preparation, should be finalized as soon as possible by the Westminster City Council, in cooperation with the other members of the Steering Group.

It was noted that the management plan is to be a primarily web-based resource. DCMS felt there may also need to be a paper copy. Project plan with suggested structure/ contents been circulated, all asked to provide feedback direct to WCC on this, text will be circulated for comments as drafted and workshop held, along with smaller meetings to discuss key issues. ICOMOS UK noted the importance of ensuring any stripped back management plan does not lose important content and noted the importance of ensuring input and consultation and it was agreed this is needed. WCC to lead on providing response/update for next meeting.

Recommendation 9: Steering Group should be revitalized, with regular meetings and a more action oriented perspective in regard to overseeing the implementation of the Management Plan. The Greater London Authority should also take a more active role in the Steering Group (perhaps becoming a co-chair) to bridge differences amongst the boroughs.

Suggestion that the Steering Group could consider and review planning applications which have the potential to impact on OUV was raised, may be an opportunity to show proposals that have an impact on OUV. It was noted a cautious approach was needed and this should be an information sharing process rather than decision-making. There may also be sensitivity in relation to confidential pre-app. However, would be useful to steer developers to have conversations and share information with the steering group to raise awareness

It was also suggested that the steering group could identify schemes which may have an impact on OUV and the steering group could have a role in deciding which might need to be referred to the world heritage centre. Southwark suggests steering group could decide, see things and consider the sort of thing we need to notify UNESCO. GLA would consider being co-chair, agreed this would be discussed separately.

Recommendation 10: to create an inventory of already issued building permission for tall buildings with indication of the level of their realization (not yet started, started, under construction, almost finished). At least in the context of the World Heritage property it would also be advisable to create a tool for possible amendment during realization (e.g. building stop at lowest level, having less floors as planned etc.).

As preliminary measure, WCC has put information from State of Conservation reports into an excel database of sites. GLA does not have database with this information. Potential for this to be circulated prior to steering group for updates and incorporated within management plan but format/ detail and how this will be updated needs to be discussed. This can be circulated to boroughs/ GLA/ HE for comment. WCC to lead on getting comments from others on this and prepare update on how this has been taken forward at next meeting.

Recommendation 12: The State Party needs to use a more robust method of carrying out Heritage Impact Assessments on any developments, which may have an impact on the OUV of the property. These HIA need to have the strong input and advice of Historic England and should become the basis for any decision-making for approval of development projects.

It was suggested that there is a need for clarification of what World Heritage Committee understanding of content of an HIA is, as detailed heritage statements/ EIA etc. are already produced for development proposals. Guidance on HIA has been produced by ICOMOS but there is not enough awareness of this and it was noted that the committee likes to understand impact on OUV. A note on this could be prepared with advice on this. WCC to prepare in consultation with DCMS/HE.

Recommendation 13/ 14:

The 3D modelling system, that is currently in development, should continue to be refined and developed in a way that allows developers, planners, and decision makers to have a more dynamic system of view protections for the World Heritage property. In regard to views, the system of important views should be reviewed to take into account the possibilities of views at different levels and in “non-traditional” places.

The planning process should be revised to take into account the impact, not only of single development proposals, but also the cumulative effects of a number of projects either approved or in the planning stage. Tools such as 3D modelling should be used to more easily see these potential cumulative effects.

These two recommendations cover similar ground and one response on these can be prepared. It was noted that tools exist for this but there is a need to consider how we can use these to express OUV in a new and innovative way. Work done by Lambeth with Miller Haire and GLA is considering how they can use this looking at immediate/wider setting. A number of boroughs are using/ considering using VUcity, as is Historic England. GLA noted that ideally should have one tool used consistently

With regards to ‘non-traditional views’ it was noted that developers may give view they want to see, with VUcity you can go anywhere. It is also useful to aid public understanding.

The issue of cumulative impact, and whether further advice is necessary to understand where is the line was discussed, DCMS/ DCLG not convinced there is more can be done in guidance. HE also noted they were doing work revising their guidance on these issues and that seeing history in the view is being merged with setting guidance.

GLA/ boroughs to provide response to this.

Recommendation 18: The State Party may wish to reconsider the establishment of a buffer zone around the World Heritage property. While not able to deal with issues related to the larger setting, a buffer zone could be a useful tool to inform future development and design of any new elements in the vicinity of the World Heritage property.

Noted this also links to recommendations 13/14, Views and 3D modelling can help with giving sense of what is wider setting/ immediate setting and using protected silhouettes may help to increase understanding/ effectively create a buffer zone. Miller Haire have been exploring and

GLA and Lambeth have been liaising on how this work could be used. GLA/ boroughs to lead in providing some response on ongoing work for next meeting.

Recommendation 16: The phased approach to the closure of Abingdon Street, the demolition of the temporary education centre, and the development of an updated visitor management and interpretation strategy is welcomed. In conformity with paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, the State Party should inform the World Heritage Centre as proposals are developed for any changes to the spaces adjacent to the Palace of Westminster, Westminster Abbey, Saint Margaret's Church, and Parliament Square that may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the Property.

Plans remain under discussion but the World Heritage Centre will be notified through this committee of any proposals.

Recommendation 17: The Holocaust Foundation may wish to consider setting up a mechanism whereby the Jury of the design competition for the memorial is able to get advice from the World Heritage Centre and/or Advisory Bodies before a final decision is taken. In any event, the selected design and related developments should be submitted to the World Heritage Centre, in conformity with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines.

Competition jury had met and announcement is due to be made public shortly. The foundation has already had input from multiple stakeholders including significant involvement from HE. Although no direct link with World Heritage Centre, through involvement of HE should meet requirements to notify UNESCO. Holocaust Memorial Foundation will provide a statement updating on this for the March meeting.

Recommendation 19: As more detailed plans are developed for the Restoration and Renewal project for Westminster Palace, the State Party should keep the World Heritage Centre and Advisory Bodies informed as soon as possible, particularly in regard to demolitions or new constructions, but also to any other significant works that may impact on the OUV of the property. This early notice will avoid any misunderstandings as the work progresses.

Parliamentary Estates indicated that they still don't have dates/ certainty on restoration and renewal project but they undertook to keep the World Heritage Centre informed through this committee. They also noted that the extent to which works will have a discernible visual impact that will impact on OUV is not clear at this stage. Parliamentary Estates are preparing conservation management plan and should have draft by the end of the year. Parliamentary estates will provide an update for March.

Recommendation 20: The Restoration and Renewal project offers the Westminster team an opportunity to reconsider the temporary structures for entertaining along the riverside façade of the palace. Any eventual hospitality structures on that important view should take into account the visual impacts from the Lambeth side of the river and should in no way have a negative impact on OUV.

Parliamentary Estates agreed that this will be considered as part of the project, it was noted this is positive but it will be important also to ensure appropriate hostile vehicle mitigation. This will be included in update from Parliamentary Estates with Recommendation 19.

Recommendation 21: The mission team regrets that the work on the Triforium project was carried out without an HIA and without informing the World Heritage Centre prior to commencement of the project. While it does not appear that this addition will have a negative impact on the OUV of the property, it is recommended that *any future work* be subject to HIA and information being provided. In the meantime, the mission recommends that full information on the existing project be sent to the World Heritage Centre, as well as a final report of the

works once they have been completed to ensure that there has been no negative impact on the OUV.

It was noted that further information on project has been sent to the World Heritage Centre, and final report will be sent on completion of the works. This project had been presented to the committee and clarification is needed on process. It was noted that the recommendation refers to any future work clarification needed of when works trigger requirement to notify. Abbey has some modest future proposals which they would be happy to bring to the committee but agreed that the likelihood is that this means anything of significance. Guidance on HIA and reporting process to UNESCO under Recommendations 7 and 12 will help address this.

Recommendation 22: The Greater London Authority should consider the creation of a “joint committee” or other coordinating structure, which would allow the four World Heritage properties in London to establish mechanisms for networking and cooperation in management and conservation. This process should be open to all boroughs who are involved in the management and conservation of these properties.

GLA indicated their willingness to do this and will provide written update before next meeting.

Recommendation 23: DCMS In a similar fashion, the national government should consider setting up a “joint committee” of all World Heritage properties in the United Kingdom to allow

Although not a government organisation, this exists in the form of WH:UK. It was noted that a number of national issues raised in the report which DCMS will be responding to more generally.