

Opinion based on basic assessment of the situation:

1. Will the Vienna Ice-Skating Club – InterContinental Hotel – Konzerthaus project negatively impact the attributes underlying the OUV of the World Heritage property to an extent that would seriously threaten the conservation and value of the World Heritage property?

“By way of summary,“ the *Executive Summary* of the Heritage Impact Assessment commissioned by the City of Vienna notes, “it may be stated that the “Ice-Skating Club-InterContinental Hotel-Wiener Konzerthaus” project in the Heumarkt location will exert an influence on existing visual axes and lines of sight.”¹

This position must be confirmed. However, the following conclusion cannot be shared:

“However, the resulting impact is relativised by the fact that this project certainly does not constitute an isolated case.”²

With regard to compliance with the criterion of *integrity*, the explanation describing the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage property “Historic Centre of Vienna” states that “The Historic Centre of Vienna has also maintained its characteristic skyline.”³

The historic skyline is characterised by Vienna’s position in the Danube valley and the roofscape formed by the volumes and functions of the Medieval, Baroque and Gründerzeit buildings as perceived against the backdrop of the hills Kahlenberg, Leopoldsberg and Bisamberg. For centuries, only the spire of St. Stephen’s Cathedral seemed visually to rise above the distinctive ridges of Kahlenberg and Leopoldsberg. The nomination file expressly mentioned two buildings as the only high-rises built in the 20th century within the core zone, i.e. the Ringturm (Erich Boltenstern, 1955) and the Herrengasse high-rise (Siegfried Theiss, Hans Jaksch, 1932): “After that, no other high-rise buildings were constructed in downtown Vienna.”⁴ The InterContinental Hotel is not mentioned in this context.

With the construction of the Raiffeisen building on Danube Canal (1974), the Hilton Stadtpark hotel (1975) and the Raiffeisen headquarters (1989), three high-rises outside the core zone were added before inscription of the Historic Centre of Vienna on the World Heritage List (2001); with a height of up to 70 metres, they seem to visually encroach on the ridges of the hills and slightly project into them. Since Vienna’s inscription on the World Heritage List, the concentration of the high-rises rising above the chain of hills into a high-rise skyline along Danube Canal was continued with the construction of the Media Tower (Hans Hollein, 2001), the Wien-Mitte Justice Centre “City Tower Vienna” (O & O Baukunst, 2003), the Uniqua Tower (Heinz Neumann, 2005), the hotel Sofitel Vienna Stephansdom (Jean Nouvel, 2010) and the new high-rise of Raiffeisen-Holding on Danube Canal (2012). Although these buildings are outside the buffer zone, their heights – which rise up to 90 metres – have exerted significant negative effects on the visual integrity of the property. The construction of the City Tower Vienna was accepted

by the World Heritage Committee, albeit with regret. The original Wien-Mitte project with its planned building heights of up to approx. 100 metres nearly entailed the removal of the Historic Centre of Vienna from the World Heritage List in 2002.

With the planned construction of the InterContinental Hotel, this development is now to be continued *within* the World Heritage property. While the previous, lower building still kept the valley of the Danube and the hill ridges visible, the height of the planned new building will block this important section of the historic panorama. The respect of the historically evolved cityscape, which was emphasised in the application for World Heritage status, and the awareness of possible risks to the Historic Centre of Vienna expressed therein are thus disregarded: “Respect for the quality and historical density of the city centre has also kept new building activities within limits in post-war times. That is why the urban prospect has remained truly authentic. This awareness has also prevented the construction of high-rise buildings from becoming standard reality.”⁵

The integrity criterion is a conditional criterion, i.e. the typical characteristics must be preserved. The historically evolved skyline of Vienna, which was specified as a key element of integrity in the statement declaring Vienna’s Outstanding Universal Value, was already significantly impaired by the high-rises constructed after inscription on the World Heritage List. The fact that a new high-rise has now been approved within the World Heritage property itself is proof positive that respect of the historically evolved cityscape is dwindling, and that the necessary repair of urban planning deficits is not used for urban renewal measures which are compatible with the World Heritage status. This means that the conservation and value of the World Heritage property are indeed threatened.

2. Will the Karlsplatz project negatively impact the attributes underlying the OUV of the World Heritage property to an extent that would seriously threaten the conservation and value of the World Heritage property?

Separating the Wien Museum from the Winterthur building by demolishing the intermediate wing resting on supports will reinstate the original urbanistic situation: Karlsplatz square will once more be connected to the street behind, and the area between the two buildings will be returned to its function as a clearly public space. While storeys will be added to both buildings, the dimension of the square will be preserved and will not compete with the church as the predominant urban element. The new independent character of the buildings will contribute positively to the structuring of the square. The only desideratum would be an alternative solution for the new museum entrance done in glass, since the current design extends (too) far – beyond the dimensions of normal-sized central projections – into Karlsplatz square.

3. Has a serious and alarming extent of urban development occurred since inscription and have its cumulative (negative) effects on the attributes underlying the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the World Heritage property attained an extent that would seriously threaten the conservation and value of the World Heritage property, and if so, how does this threat manifest itself?

As already stated (see Question No. 1), the development of building heights in the environs and now also in the core zone of the city centre has attained a degree that in connection with the lack of a management plan (see Question No. 4) threatens the conservation and value of the World Heritage property. This affects above all the historic skyline of Vienna as a characteristic defining the property's integrity. The concept of the Outstanding Universal Value underlying recognition of the Historic Centre of Vienna as a World Heritage property is increasingly reduced to buildings dating from the Middle Ages, the Baroque period and the Gründerzeit. What is negated is the fact that, "The centre of Vienna is to be seen as a historically grown urban landscape where not only the individual historical epochs are equally represented one beside the other, but where also the man-made structures are to be seen on an equal footing with the natural context."⁶

4. Are the protection and planning instruments of the City of Vienna and of the Republic of Austria sufficient to adequately protect and sustainably develop the World Heritage property?

The protection and planning instruments of the City of Vienna are adequate. Moreover, basics and guidelines are provided by the statements regarding the management of the World Heritage property contained in the nomination file as well as in texts, concepts and planning aids, such as the Vienna Memorandum, the High-rise Concept and the Glacis Master Plan. However, deficiencies exist with regard to actual compliance, implementation, holistic approach and application.

The biggest deficit lies in the fact that – 17 years after recognition of the Historic Centre of Vienna as a World Heritage property – the management plan originally announced in the application documents⁷ in order to define the objectives and measures that would ensure the protection, maintenance, utilisation, development, communication and mediation of the World Heritage property has not yet been submitted. On the basis of the nomination file and the retrospective declaration regarding the OUV, the management plan should conflate the recommendations of the Vienna Memorandum and the planning instruments into one integrated concept for planning and action. The approaches formulated in the nomination file moreover retain their validity for the preparation of the management plan:

- Develop unequivocal definitions and publish the scope and content of the city area nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List.

- Enter into agreements to cover co-ordination of all planning work within the area of the town monument. The point of all such efforts is to obtain a holistic view of the cultural property focussing on the historic centre of Vienna.
- Use and include all administrative agencies (see page 39 f.) responsible for protection, care and revitalisation; integrate ongoing activities.
- Establish a co-ordination centre within the scope of the City of Vienna government for all monument protection issues within the world heritage area.
- Nurture the quality of necessary changes in the property core and buffer zones.
- Minimise economic pressure with a view to avoiding denser build-up in the core zone.
- Develop a programme of focal issues to introduce additional positive measures, especially regarding construction, with maximum economic support within the framework of existing facilities (see page 42).
- Encourage and foster scientific efforts in the World Heritage area, and in particular complete the computer-aided inventory already started by the city administration (see page 31).
- Regularly monitor all environmental influences and the impact of tourism; monitor visitor facilities and keep them up to date.
- Appoint an interdisciplinary management plan committee charged with holistic monitoring of the installation, implementation and development of the management plan.

5. How can dialogue be improved and communication optimised in order to resolve conflicts and prevent them in the future?

As already announced in 2000 in the World Heritage application⁸, an international expert committee should be appointed and entrusted with the following tasks:

- To accompany, develop and implement the management plan
- To monitor any projects and plans for the core and buffer zones that might have negative effects on the Outstanding Universal Value
- To streamline information and communication channels

¹ Heritage Impact Assessment, An examination of the impact of the planned “Vienna Ice-Skating Club-InterContinental Hotel-Konzerthaus” project for the Outstanding Universal Value of the UNESCO World Heritage site “Historic Centre of Vienna”, published by the Chief Executive Office of the City of Vienna, Executive Group for Construction and Technology, Directorate General of Urban Planning, Development and Construction, Planning Group, Vienna, 7. April 2017, p. 65

² Ibid., p. 65

³ Ibid., p. 4

⁴ The Historic Centre of Vienna, Nomination for inscription on the World Heritage List, Federal Monuments Office, A-1010 Vienna, Hofburg, Säulenstiege, compiled by the office of architect Manfred Wehdorn, Vienna, in collaboration with the City of Vienna, Municipal Departments 7, 8, 10 and 19, Vienna, June 2000, p. 21

⁵ Ibid., p. 8

⁶ Ibid., p. 8

⁷ Ibid., p. 47

⁸ Ibid., p. 47