

Adopted Retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

(As adopted by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee at their 37th session, Phnom Pehn, Cambodia, June 2013)

Decision reference: WHC-13/37.COM/8E

Property **City of Bath**

State Party **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**

Id. N° **428**

Date of inscription **1987**

Brief synthesis

The city of Bath in South West England was founded in the 1st century AD by the Romans who used the natural hot springs as a thermal spa. It became an important centre for the wool industry in the Middle Ages but in the 18th century under the reigns of George I, II and III it developed into an elegant spa city, famed in literature and art.

The City of Bath is of Outstanding Universal Value for the following cultural attributes:

The Roman remains, especially the Temple of Sulis Minerva and the baths complex (based around the hot springs at the heart of the Roman town of Aquae Sulis, which have remained at the heart of the City's development ever since) are amongst the most famous and important Roman remains north of the Alps, and marked the beginning of Bath's history as a spa town.

The Georgian city reflects the ambitions of John Wood Senior (1704-1754), Ralph Allen (1693-1764) and Richard "Beau" Nash (1674-1761) to make Bath into one of the most beautiful cities in Europe, with architecture and landscape combined harmoniously for the enjoyment of the spa town's cure takers.

The Neo-classical style of the public buildings (such as the Assembly Rooms and the Pump Room) harmonises with the grandiose proportions of the monumental ensembles (such as Queen Square, Circus and Royal Crescent) and collectively reflects the ambitions, particularly social, of the spa city in the 18th century.

The individual Georgian buildings reflect the profound influence of Palladio (1508-1580) and their collective scale, style and the organisation of the spaces between buildings epitomises the success of architects such as the John Woods (elder 1704-1754, younger 1728-1782), Robert Adam (1728-1792), Thomas Baldwin (1750-1820) and John Palmer (1738-1817) in transposing Palladio's ideas to the scale of a complete city, situated in a hollow in the hills and built to a picturesque landscape aestheticism creating a strong garden city feel, more akin to the 19th century garden cities than the 17th century Renaissance cities.

Criterion (i): Bath's grandiose Neo-classical Palladian crescents, terraces and squares spread out over the surrounding hills and set in its green valley, are a demonstration par excellence of the integration of architecture, urban design and landscape setting, and the deliberate creation of a beautiful city. Not only are individual buildings such as the Assembly Rooms and Pump Room of great distinction, they are part of the larger overall city landscape that evolved over a century in a harmonious and logical way,

drawing together public and private buildings and spaces in a way that reflects the precepts of Palladio tempered with picturesque aestheticism. Bath's quality of architecture and urban design, its visual homogeneity and its beauty is largely testament to the skill and creativity of the architects and visionaries of the 18th and 19th centuries who applied and developed Palladianism in response to the specific opportunities offered by the spa town and its physical environment and natural resources (in particular the hot springs and the local Bath Oolitic limestone). Three men – architect John Wood Senior, entrepreneur and quarry owner Ralph Allen and celebrated social shaper and Master of Ceremonies Richard “Beau” Nash – together provided the impetus to start this social, economic and physical rebirth, resulting in a city that played host to the social, political and cultural leaders of the day. That the architects who followed were working over the course of a century, with no master plan or single patron, did not prevent them from contriving to relate each individual development to those around it and to the wider landscape, creating a city that is harmonious and logical, in concord with its natural environment and extremely beautiful.

Criterion (ii): Bath exemplifies the 18th century move away from the inward-looking uniform street layouts of Renaissance cities that dominated through the 15th–17th centuries, towards the idea of planting buildings and cities in the landscape to achieve picturesque views and forms, which could be seen echoed around Europe particularly in the 19th century. This unifying of nature and city, seen throughout Bath, is perhaps best demonstrated in the Royal Crescent (John Wood Younger) and Lansdown Crescent (John Palmer). Bath's urban and landscape spaces are created by the buildings that enclose them, providing a series of interlinked spaces that flow organically, and that visually (and at times physically) draw in the green surrounding countryside to create a distinctive garden city feel, looking forward to the principles of garden cities developed by the 19th century town planners.

Criterion (iv): Bath reflects two great eras in human history: Roman and Georgian. The Roman Baths and temple complex, together with the remains of the city of Aquae Sulis that grew up around them, make a significant contribution to the understanding and appreciation of Roman social and religious society. The 18th century redevelopment is a unique combination of outstanding urban architecture, spatial arrangement and social history. Bath exemplifies the main themes of the 18th century neoclassical city; the monumentalisation of ordinary houses, the integration of landscape and town, and the creation and interlinking of urban spaces, designed and developed as a response to the growing popularity of Bath as a society and spa destination and to provide an appropriate picturesque setting and facilities for the cure takers and social visitors. Although Bath gained greatest importance in Roman and Georgian times, the city nevertheless reflects continuous development over two millennia with the spectacular medieval Abbey Church sat beside the Roman temple and baths, in the heart of the 18th century and modern day city.

Integrity

Remains of the known Roman baths, the Temple of Sulis Minerva and the below grounds Roman archaeology are well preserved and within the property boundary as are the areas of Georgian town planning and architecture, and large elements of the landscape within which the city is set. Despite some loss of Georgian buildings prior to inscription, the Georgian City remains largely intact both in terms of buildings and plan form. An extensive range of interlinked spaces formed by crescents, terraces and squares set in a harmonious relationship with the surrounding green landscape survive. The relationship of the Georgian City to its setting of the surrounding hills

remains clearly visible. As a modern city, Bath remains vulnerable to large-scale development and to transport pressures, both within the site and in its setting that could impact adversely on its garden city feel and on views across the property and to its green setting.

Authenticity

The hot springs, which are the reason for the City's original development, are of undoubted authenticity. The key Roman remains are preserved, protected and displayed within a museum environment, and the Roman Baths can still be appreciated for their original use. The majority of the large stock of Georgian buildings have been continuously inhabited since their construction, and retain a high degree of original fabric. Repairs have largely been sympathetic, informed by an extensive body of documentation, and aided by a programme of restoration in the late twentieth century. More vulnerable is the overall interaction between groups of buildings in terraces, crescents and squares and views to the surrounding landscape that contributed to the City's visual harmony. There is a need for new developments to respect the planning of the Georgian terraces, to respect the scale and rhythm of its structures, and to contribute to picturesque views.

Protection and Management Requirements

The UK Government protects World Heritage properties in England in two ways. Firstly, individual buildings, monuments and landscapes are designated under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the 1979 Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act, and secondly through the UK Spatial Planning system under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Acts.

Government guidance on protecting the Historic Environment and World Heritage is set out in National Planning Policy Framework and Circular 07/09. Policies to protect, promote, conserve and enhance World Heritage properties, their settings and buffer zones are also found in statutory planning documents. The Bath and North East Somerset Local Plan contains a core policy according to which the development which would harm the qualities justifying the inscription of the World Heritage property, or its setting, will not be permitted. The protection of the surrounding landscape of the property has been strengthened by adoption of a Supplementary Planning Document, and negotiations are progressing with regard to transferring the management of key areas of land from the Bath and North East Somerset Council to the National Trust.

The City of Bath World Heritage Site Steering Group was established as a non-executive committee consisting of representatives from 14 organisations with interest in the site. It has an independent chairperson. Members represent national government, Bath and North East Somerset Council elected members and officers, surrounding Parish Councils, heritage bodies, and the city business group, resident's associations, both universities and the tourism company.

The Steering Group oversees the production and implementation of the World Heritage Site Management Plan. This plan aims to address the key tensions between development and conservation of the city-wide property. The main pressures currently facing the site are large-scale development and the need for improved transport. The need for development to be based on an understanding of the distinctiveness and Outstanding Universal

Value of the Georgian City continues to be guided by the policy framework listed above. A UNESCO/ICOMOS Mission assessed the development at Bath Western Riverside in 2008 and concluded that the Outstanding Universal Value and Integrity would not be adversely impacted by the phase one development. Subsequent phases are planned but not yet timetabled.

Transport improvements are based principally around a bus-based network and pedestrianisation, as outlined in the Management Plan.

Tourism is managed by Bath Tourism Plus, an independent company. The Destination Management Plan has been updated by a 'Destination Marketing Strategy' for Bath, which aims to promote growth in value of tourism rather than in volume.