

## ICOMOS Technical Review

<b>Property</b>	<b>Defence Line of Amsterdam</b>
<b>State Party</b>	<b>The Netherlands</b>
<b>Property ID</b>	<b>759</b>
<b>Date inscription</b>	<b>1996</b>
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>(ii)(iv)(v)</b>
<b>Project</b>	<b>A8-A9 link road, train depot and construction of residential building.</b>

### Brief description:

Extending 135 km around the city of Amsterdam, this defence line (built between 1883 and 1920) is the only example of a fortification based on the principle of controlling the waters. Since the 16th century, the people of the Netherlands have used their expert knowledge of hydraulic engineering for defence purposes. The centre of the country was protected by a network of 45 armed forts, acting in concert with temporary flooding from polders and an intricate system of canals and locks.

### Justification of the inscription (Decision CONF 201 VIII.C):

The Committee decided to inscribe the nominated property on the basis of cultural criteria (ii), (iv) and (v) considering that the site is of Outstanding Universal Value as it is an exceptional example of an extensive integrated defence system of the modern period which has survived intact and well conserved since it was created in the late 19th century. It is also notable due to the unique way in which the Dutch ingenuity for hydraulic engineering has been incorporated into the defences of the nation's capital city.

### Management and protection declaration (updated 2015)

The protection of the property's component sites is multi-level and comprehensive. The Province of Noord-Holland is the site owner. Site management is also in the hands of the national government, the Province of Utrecht, 23 municipal authorities and three water boards. In addition, the many management bodies and owners of sections of the Defence Line of Amsterdam (e.g. nature conservation organisations and private parties) play a role. The north side of the Defence Line of Amsterdam overlaps with the Beemster Polder, another World Heritage site. The World Heritage property of the Defence Line of Amsterdam has no buffer zone.

In 2015, the provinces of Noord-Holland and Utrecht adopted the Management Plan 2015. The plan clarifies what the provinces, as site owners, will do up until and including 2020 to preserve and protect the attributes of the World Heritage site. In addition, the Province of Noord-Holland – in the 2014-2016 implementation programme for the Defence Line of Amsterdam – deals with the preservation of the Defence Line of Amsterdam and the development of the World Heritage site into a distinguishable and cohesive area with special experiential value.

### **A - A8-A9 Link Road and Train Depot projects in the same North-Western section of the “Defence Line of Amsterdam”**

ICOMOS examined the following documentation submitted by the State Party informing on the planned A8-A9 link road and train depot:

- Defence Line of Amsterdam Heritage Impact Assessment A8-A9 Link Road, 6 October 2015;
- State Party State of Conservation report: Planned A8-A9 Link Road within “Defence Line of Amsterdam” World Heritage Site, October 2015;

- Defence Line of Amsterdam Heritage Impact Assessment Train Depot near Uitgeest, 6 October 2015;
- State Party State of Conservation report: Planned Train Depot within “Defence Line of Amsterdam” World Heritage Site, October 2015.

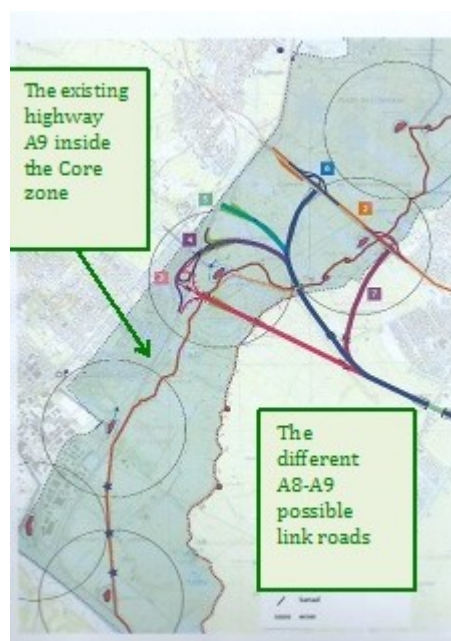
*Context and brief analysis of the A8-A9 link road situation:*

The Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) report examines a series of possible A8-A9 highway connections, taking account of the situation of the Defence Line of Amsterdam forts and other attributes (canals, dikes, flooding zones and etc.) which express the Outstanding Universal Value of the property. Apart from one of the solutions (n°7), all of the proposed alternatives are inside the WH property. The alternative solution that is not inside the WH property is on the limit of the property (there is no buffer zone).

The State Party’s state of conservation report highlights the general level of urban and economic pressure nearby the large city of Amsterdam, and more specifically the need to complete the missing links between the different highways of the province (North Holland) and to facilitate local and regional traffic in order to improve the everyday quality of life of inhabitants. The report also recalls the protection framework and the spatial planning rules in force:

“Since as far back as the 1960s, central government and the province have been discussing the necessity and benefit of filling in a missing link in the national road network (A7, A8, and A9) in the area to the north of Amsterdam. [...] The existing link between the A8 and A9 motorways – which consists of a stretch of the N246 and a stretch of the N203 – is unable to cope effectively with the (through) traffic.” (SOC report p. 7)

Studies for the project were carried out following national, provincial and local regulations, and in consideration of the *Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention*. For this reason, an extensive Heritage Impact Assessment was carried out following the rule of art, notably the ICOMOS document: *Guidance on Heritage Impact Assessments for Cultural World Heritage Properties* (2011). The alternative solution n°7, that does not directly impact the WH property, has an important default in that it implies a derivation of the A8 traffic on a short segment of classical road (N 203) before joining the A9, which could be not entirely satisfactory in future due to traffic jam problems.



### *ICOMOS global view of the situation for the A8-A9 link road and Train depot zone*

The social needs for improving the network of transportation in the immediate surroundings of the North-Western part of the Defence Line of Amsterdam are important. Furthermore, the ongoing global economic and urban growth in the immediate surroundings of the great city of Amsterdam are undoubtable. This has had numerous effects throughout the past all around the Defence Line of Amsterdam and sometimes inside the WH property itself, as would be the case with these two projects. ICOMOS must also note that the Defence Line of Amsterdam is a large, protected territory around Amsterdam city offering both a “greenbelt” and an open space which is very attractive for some projects, especially transportation infrastructures (roads, trains, canals, ports and airport). The area of the whole WH property is comparable to Amsterdam city itself! On the other hand, all the protection laws and rules seem clearly and correctly defined and applied in order to guarantee the best means of development with the least possible impact on heritage conservation, especially on the Outstanding Universal Value of the WH property.

The North-Western and Western part of the Defence Line of Amsterdam was historically an important zone for urban settlements and for transportation growth (e.g. the historical railway line, the existing roads and highways, the close urban settlements, port development, etc.).

The HIA document explains that the situation was not so clear at the time of the property’s nomination and inscription (1995-1996). Notable buildings and infrastructure programs were undertaken at that time inside the WH property itself:

“The section of the A9 between the Beverwijk and Velsen intersections, including the Wijk tunnel, was opened on 11 July 1996. [...] A residential district (Broekpolder) has been built in the original inundation area between Fort Veldhuis and fort St. Aagtendijk to the west of the main defence line.” (HIA p. 39)

The 1990s development works in this section of the Defence Line of Amsterdam were conform to the Dutch zoning rules before the time of nomination and even though there was some overlapping agenda, they did not affect the property’s inscription on the World Heritage List and the global recognition of Outstanding Universal Value at that time. Nevertheless, their visual impacts are notable and they compromised the quality of landscape in this zone. Other elements have had additional visual impact on the landscape’s perception such as modern wind-turbines or electricity pylons for power supply (HIA p. 40). Generally speaking, the property’s earlier constructions are sometimes very visible in the landscape but are not given much consideration in the HIA; photos showing possible impacts of the project are mainly oriented in other directions omitting these important existing visual features. There is no cumulating approach of visual impact between what is existing and what could happen with different alternative projects.

The documents show other important projects inside the immediately adjacent part of the WH property: the Train Depot, but also others in the immediate surroundings (p. 40). These are mainly related to urbanism and they are not studied in the HIA because there is no buffer zone designated for the WH property and consequently no specific regulations even though projects could be located very close to the forts and dike system. This is due to the military settlement which aimed to protect the city from the outside and thus formed large external flood zones but not inside, where they could remain very narrow.

### *Assessment of the A8-A9 junction project in the HIA document*

The HIA is undoubtedly well done in technical terms and it offers a good example of the implementation of the ICOMOS recommendations for studying Outstanding Universal Value and integrity-authenticity, with a real effort to propose a large number of possible solutions. Each alternative is correctly documented in technical terms and possible impacts on Outstanding Universal Value including integrity and authenticity aspects. Combined impacts with the Train Depot project have also properly been studied and a conclusion providing the degree of effect of the different

possibilities appears well established. It also shows important efforts towards technical solutions aiming to minimize visual impacts (tunnel, partial underground solutions, dikes or line of trees, etc.). ICOMOS notes with satisfaction the State Party's efforts to try to design adapted solutions to maintain and to express all the dimensions of the property's Outstanding Universal Value.

Nevertheless, what is not totally satisfying in ICOMOS's point of view is first related to the visualisation of the solutions proposed in the HIA; and second to the lack of visual impact assessment taking into consideration already existing features in the landscape, both within and outside (urbanism, A9 road, railway-line, wind turbine, etc.), which obviously impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the North-Western part of the WH property. In other words, the HIA does not present a real landscape evaluation taking account of all the existing elements which possibly affect the Outstanding Universal Value by a combination of negative visual features. The reality of the actual landscape should be considered as well as the possible new impacts implied by the different design projects.

From a broader point of view, it seems that this part of the landscape of the Defence Line of Amsterdam was already compromised at the time of inscription, with a notable risk of increased negative effects with the current proposed projects. This appears as the weak link of the World Heritage listed property because it seems at the same time and from the beginning a strategic place for the urban and transportation development of "Grand Amsterdam". In other words, the landscape expression of the Outstanding Universal Value is already partially compromised here; which could open discussion about the whole property itself as cultural landscape, not only for the section concerned in the report. In counterpart, the tangible attributes (forts, dikes, hydraulic system, etc.) are clearly strong and well preserved as is their continuity as evidence of the defence line; the State Party's efforts to preserve these components are crucial.

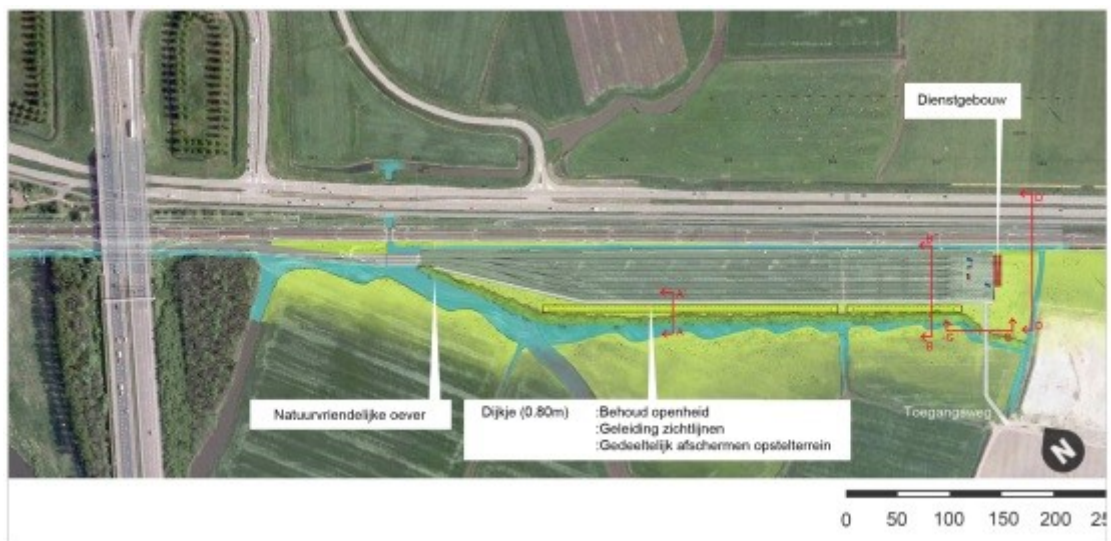
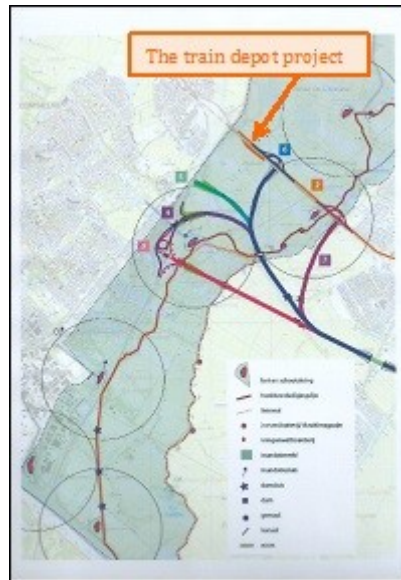
As the State Party's state of conservation report lengthily underlines: the social and economic needs for improving transportation at this location place are old and important. This forms a key point for the future and there is a need to have a sustainable, final choice compatible with the World Heritage property. The inhabitants' daily quality of life must be taken into account if it is intended to share with them the value of the Defence Line of Amsterdam for long time. That could lead to punctually updating the definition of the property, not only to make a local compromise but inside a global approach, and to better define what is really expressing the Outstanding Universal Value. Is it a continuity of tangible attributes? Is it always an exceptional cultural landscape with all its elements or not?

Technically speaking, following examination of the HIA, alternative n°7 looks like the least impacting solution on the property's landscape values. In ICOMOS's view and as already mentioned above, this must be completed by visual studies and virtual images of the global landscape taking count of existing attributes compromising heritage values in the main view axis. Furthermore, in the perspective of sustainable conservation of the property versus social efficiency of the proposed A8-A9 link road, we have also to examine whether the solutions are fully satisfying or not in terms of transportation. Alternative n°7 (and n°6) uses a section of road N203 and it is not directly connected to the highway A9 as are n° 3-4-5. Is this sustainable for future transportation efficiency?

#### *Context and brief analysis of the Train Depot near Uitgeest situation:*

This project proposes to add a train depot close to the existing railway line. This railway line was implemented in coordination with the construction of the Defence Line of Amsterdam and its use supporting military logistic functions. Nowadays it is used as short-distance transportation within the Amsterdam global train network. It could be considered as an extension of existing train facilities. Following significant increase of social needs, the project aims to reinforce the train transportation capacity of the line due to the growth of the important surrounding, urban zone.

The main visual effect will be caused by stationary trains in the depot. There are technical proposals to minimize this visual impact: lowered track settlement, a dike or line of trees. Some technical buildings are also required. Furthermore, there are already technical elements that compromise the view such as the location shown in the HIA (photo of electric devices for the line and for power supply, p. 51).



*ICOMOS Recommendations:*

- The maintenance of the integrity and authenticity of tangible attributes must be a central issue for the final decision: the forts and military elements, canal, dikes and hydraulic elements. ICOMOS would welcome confirmation that these elements are in a good state of conservation and that there will be no alteration to the continuity of the technical features of the defence system in this zone;
- For the A8-A9 link road visual impact, it seems necessary to pay attention to the existing visual features already compromising the Outstanding Universal Value (urbanism, A9 road, wind-turbine, etc.). This could be done first by definition of the main axis of view of the WH property in this section; and second by producing 3D landscape models of what already

exists and what could happen with the new projects (without these visual models it is difficult to imagine what the future landscape will be );

- For the A8-A9 link road, solution n°7 appears to offer the least impact on heritage; but it would also be necessary to document whether it is a sustainable transportation solution, considering the use of a segment of national road. Whether alternative n°7 is fully sustainable or not, it seems preferable to simultaneously examine a more direct solution (n°3-4-5) and perhaps to reconsider the delimitations of the property at this location, with a more global analysis of the general Amsterdam socio-urban and economic pressure on the Defence Line of Amsterdam as a whole;
- For the train depot, if there is absolutely no other location to construct it out of the WH property, the visual impact must be the least possible, taking into account the very visual aspect of moving stocks at the depot: a depot of short or medium length along the existing line is preferable with the addition of visual fences (dikes, line of trees); this may be negatively qualified as “camouflage” but it seems not possible to carry out the project in other way, and Uitgeest train transportation is part of the property’s Outstanding Universal Value;
- Finally, ICOMOS recommends examining the possibility of defining a buffer zone to avoid visual impacts in the places where forts and dikes are close to the property’s boundaries.

## **B - Residential project at Edam-Volendam**

ICOMOS received the following documentation informing on a planned residential project :

- 3<sup>rd</sup> party letter, signed Mr. Ross, 10 April 2015, expressing concern about a new residential building inside the Defence Line of Amsterdam WH property, municipality of Edam-Volendam (in Dutch);
- Letter in response from the Permanent Delegation of the Netherlands to UNESCO, 15 September 2015 (in English).

### *Context and brief analysis of the situation:*

The information received, of which only the State Party’s letter of response is in English, does not include any map, photos or technical information about the project and possible visual impacts, so it is not possible for ICOMOS to provide technical advice. On the other hand, the chronological information about the use of heritage laws and regulations in force on a local, provincial and national level, seems fully and appropriately applied, giving the rights for the construction of the new building (to replace a traditional farmhouse) to the farm owner.

### *ICOMOS Recommendation*

- To carry out studies to verify whether the visual impact of the authorised project won’t affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property. ICOMOS would welcome some illustrations and/or 3d models in order to allow for an appropriate evaluation of the project.