## EIA in a World Heritage Site

This article examines the requirements for EIA which include development partially or wholly within a World Heritage Site and is based upon a recent EIA completed by BDP for a development within the Canterbury World Heritage Site.

### Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) Estate Masterplan

BDP was commissioned by CCCU in 2014 to prepare a masterplan for their North Holmes Campus. The majority of the North Holmes campus falls within the Canterbury World Heritage Site (WHS) which comprises three Grade I listed assets; Canterbury Cathedral, St Augustine’s Abbey and St Martin’s Church as well as the Northgate conservation area.

The purchase of the former HM Canterbury Prison (itself a Grade II listed building) acted as the catalyst for the University to adopt a comprehensive approach to the redevelopment of its Canterbury estate over the next 15 to 20 years. At the core of the Estate Master Plan is the desire to sensitively re-integrate the North Holmes Campus into its historic setting and re-establish physical and visual links between the three parts of World Heritage Site whilst strengthening the University’s education offer.

### Prison Quarter

The first part of the campus masterplan to come forward was the Prison Quarter. The proposals are for a new student services hub, a heritage centre within the prison and adjacent engineering building, below ground car park and new public routes and spaces.

BDP undertook detailed consultation to identify the most historically sensitive redevelopment of the Grade II prison and opportunities to improve visual and physical links with the three parts of the WHS. The proposal retains A and B Wings of the prison and the removal of C Wing. The new build extension to the prison together with the new teaching block adjacent to the prison are of a siting, scale and mass to enable the creation of a new public square overlooking St Augustine’s Abbey with a direct route to St Martin’s Church. From here, there is a direct vista to the Bell Harry Tower of Canterbury Cathedral, reinforcing the historic and spiritual links between the two which lie at the core of the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site.

BDP consulted extensively throughout the design process with the local community and heritage groups including The World Heritage Committee, The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), Canterbury Archaeological Trust, Historic England and the City Council and gained their total support.

### Consultation Process

ICOMOS was identified as a key stakeholder at the outset of the masterplan project. A strategy for engaging ICOMOS and securing its buy-in to the Prison Quarter proposals was identified as a means of reducing planning risk. Newsletters providing updates on the progress of the design and timings for consultations were issued to ICOMOS in advance of site tour and presentation and discussion before the submission of the planning application.
As a result of this engagement, ICOMOS supported the proposals and raised no objection to the planning application.

Relevance to EIA
In addition to applying the heritage assessments in the National Planning Policy Framework and the Historic England Good Practice in Planning Notes (2015), an EIA within a WHS must consider the operational guidelines of UNESCO and ICOMOS.


World Heritage Sites are inscribed for their Outstanding Universal Value, which the Operational Guidelines defines as ‘cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity.’ Inscription on the World Heritage List depends on an asset being of Outstanding Universal Value and meeting at least one of ten selection criteria.

In 2011, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) published guidance on the process of commissioning Heritage Impact Assessments for World Heritage assets, in order to evaluate the impact of potential development on the Outstanding Universal Value of the heritage asset. The guidance states that the assessment of potential impacts must include:

- A comprehensive understanding of the World Heritage Property and its OUV, authenticity and integrity, condition, context (including other heritage attributes) and interrelationships
- An understanding of the range of impacts arising from the development or other proposals for change

As will be observed, the UNESCO and ICOMOS assessment criteria are similar to the assessments of significance required under the NPPF. However, any assessment must be based around the consent of OUV to be considered valid, any assessment which only considers significance without explicit reference to the selection criteria for OUV is unlikely to be adequate.

_BDP, April 2017._