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|  |  | Heritage Team4th Floor100 Parliament StreetLondon SW1A 2BQT: 020 7211 2018hannah.jones@culture.gov.uk [**www.gov.uk/dcms**](http://www.gov.uk/dcms) |
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|   |  | 20 September 2016 |
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Dear Dr Rӧssler,

**Response to Decision 40 COM 7A.31 on Liverpool Maritime Mercantile City (C1150)**

Thank you for your letter of 9 August 2016 and the attached World Heritage Committee decision 40 COM 7A.31.

In response to the decision I can confirm that Liverpool City Council (LCC) is now refining the DSOCR and that the State Party will send you the final text by 1 December 2016. LCC will also be providing a progress report on the elaboration of the Liverpool Local Plan, which will be incorporated in the SOCR that we will send to you by 1 February 2017. Following LCC Cabinet approval to the process and timetable for producing the Liverpool Local Plan, the draft Liverpool Local Plan opened for public consultation on 15th September 2016 and this will run until 31st October 2016. We would be pleased to send the full consultation draft of the Liverpool Local Plan to you for review prior to adoption. However, if you wish to view it in advance, the however in advance the hyperlink to access the document is as follows: http://liverpool.gov.uk/council/consultation. The timetable for producing the Liverpool Local Plan is appended to this letter. The 2009 Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for the WHS, which provides the more detailed information which underpins the Local Plan’s heritage policies, will also be revised in tandem with the Local Plan. We will be able to consult you and the Advisory Bodies on the revisions to the SPD if you so wish.

We have also noted that the Committee has requested that we submit a ‘Master Plan’ to you for review by the Advisory Bodies by 1 December 2018. We are working on the assumption that the Committee intends that this Master Plan should include *“the need for a global approach, linking the strategic development vision to a regulatory planning document, which provides clear legal guidelines to protect the OUV of the property, and in turn helps developers design their projects accordingly”* as set out in paragraph 4 of the decision.We would welcome clarification of whether this assumption is correct. If so, the State Party will need to give careful consideration to how this Master Plan will relate to the Liverpool Local Plan, the SPD and the WHS Management Plan. We are anxious to avoid too many overlapping documents which could lead to confusion rather than provide clarity. We should add that the WHS Management Plan is currently being updated by LCC with the support of Historic England and is scheduled for completion in early 2017.

The Committee has requested “*the State Party to ensure that only repair and reuse of historic buildings, maintenance works and small scale projects should receive permission within the rest of the property* [beyond the central docks component of Liverpool Waters] *until the DSOCR is finalised and adopted.”* While we will submit the DSOCR to you by 1 December this year and hope that the Committee will agree it in July 2017, it is neither possible within existing UK legislation nor desirable for the State Party to stop LCC from taking planning decisions on new developments within the World Heritage Property.

We will, however, continue to work in partnership with LCC, Historic England and developers to ensure that planning decisions are informed by Heritage Impact Assessments and that development will be permitted only where it does not, in the light of these HIAs, have an adverse effect on OUV. In consultation with Historic England, LCC has reinforced the assessment of all major developments within the World Heritage Site in line with the ICOMOS Guidance on Heritage Impact Assessments for Cultural World Heritage Properties, 2011. LCC have taken this approach to the Princes Reach and Skelhorne Street developments in the buffer zone referred to in paragraph 7 of the Committee’s decision. Where appropriate, we will continue to seek the advice of the World Heritage Centre through paragraph 172 notifications.

We are aware that some Committee members might be disappointed that we are unable to accede to their request to limit the granting of planning permissions. We would, however, respectfully draw attention to the fact that the State of Conservation of the World Heritage Property is much better today than it was when the site was inscribed in 2004. LCC’s buildings at risk strategy has resulted in a huge reduction in the numbers of historic buildings at risk across the city, including many which make significant contributions to the OUV of the WHS. By the end of 2016, LCC estimates the figure will have fallen to just 2.6 per cent, which is less than half the national average. The re-use and redevelopment of historic properties is a major priority for LCC and in recent times projects such as Central Library, the Everyman Theatre, the Philharmonic Halls, Albion House, the Cunard Building, Royal Insurance Building and Stanley Dock at a combined cost of around £160M have combined to enhance attributes and associated attributes of the OUV of the WHS. In addition, major new developments have been successfully incorporated within the fabric of the WHS and its buffer zone, including the Arena, Convention and Exhibition Centres on the City’s internationally famous and recognisable waterfront.

The decisions taken by the Committee in 2015 and 2016 have, in our view unjustifiably, broadened the concerns over the Liverpool Waters development to apply to the whole of the property. While we do not in any way underestimate the challenge in ensuring that Liverpool Waters does not cause potentially irrevocable harm to the OUV of the WHS, the key word here is *potential*. Developments within Liverpool Waters to date have not caused harm to OUV, and the DSOCR, which is a very high priority for the State Party, will seek to ensure that corrective measures that prevent potential harm in the future to OUV are put in place to the satisfaction of the Committee. As part of this process we would be very pleased to welcome to Liverpool any member of the World Heritage Committee who wish to assess the situation for themselves. I am therefore copying this letter to the permanent delegations of the States Parties currently serving on the Committee in order to extend this invitation.

May I also draw your attention to the letter attached from Joe Anderson, Mayor of Liverpool, describing in his own words how important heritage is to the City and supporting the contents and deadlines agreed to within this letter.

I hope that the information above provides some reassurance as to the multiple measures being undertaken to address the various recommendations in the Committee decision, and colleagues and I would be happy to discuss these further with you if it would be helpful. If you require any further information at this point please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

Hannah Jones

World Heritage Site and Underwater Policy Advisor

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| **Liverpool Local Plan Timetable** | **Indicative Dates** |
| Stage 1 – Initial Consultation Completed | (completed April 2014) |
| Stage 2 - Consult on a Draft Local Plan under Regulation 18 – Initial Consultation Part 2 (Cabinet Approval required) Minimum 6 weeks.  | September - October 2016 |
| Stage 3 - Publication of the final draft of the Local Plan & public consultation to seek representations relating to the local plan (Full Council Approval required – statutory processes). | April/May 2017 |
| Stage 4 - Independent Examination (including Examination hearings period) and If required Public Consultation on Proposed Modifications and final Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat Regulations Assessment. (Cabinet Approval required for statutory process).  | July – Dec 2017 |
| Stage 5 – City Council adopts Local Plan. | Dec 2017  |