Bruges, World Heritage City, a risk analysis
World Heritage site: 410 ha
buffer zone: 168 ha

Brussels: 1,48 ha / 20,93 ha
Luxemburg: 29,94 ha / 108,73 ha
Amsterdam: 198,2 ha / 481,7 ha

- **Criterion (ii):** The Historic Town of Brugge is testimony, over a long period, of a **considerable exchange of influences on the development of architecture, particularly in brick Gothic**, as well as favouring innovative artistic influences in the development of medieval painting, being the birthplace of the school of the Flemish Primitives.

- **Criterion (iv):** The Historic Town of Brugge is an **outstanding example of an architectural ensemble**, illustrating significant stages in the commercial and cultural fields in **medieval Europe**, of which the public, social, and religious institutions are a living testimony.

- **Criterion (vi):** The Town of Brugge was **birthplace of the Flemish Primitives** and a centre of patronage and development of painting in the Middle Ages with artists such as Jan van Eyck and Hans Memling.
Outstanding Universal Value

Brief synthesis

The Historic Centre of Bruges is an outstanding example of an architectural ensemble, illustrating significant stages in the commercial and cultural fields in medieval Europe. Bruges in medieval times was known as a commercial metropolis in the heart of Europe. The city reflects a considerable exchange of influences on the development of art and architecture, and the heritage of the Flemish Primitives, which is characteristic of southern Europe and the Baltic. This architecture strongly demonstrates the character of the historic spirit of the city.

The 13th century city walls mark the boundaries of the medieval city. Although the walls themselves are lost today, they remain clearly visible, emphasized by the first war gates, the ramparts, and the five defensive towers. The medieval street pattern, with many radial streets leading towards the important public squares, has mostly been preserved, as well as the network of canals which, once used for mercantile traffic, played an important role in the development of the city.

In the 15th century, Bruges was the capital of the Dutch Republic and a centre of painting and publishing, attracting artists such as Jan van Eyck and Jan Mostaert. Many of their works were inspired and influenced painting styles all over Europe. Exceptionally important collections have remained in the city until today.

Even after its economic and artistic peak at the end of the Middle Ages, building and urban development continued, although Bruges mostly relied on the 19th-century industrial revolution. In the 18th and 19th centuries, many medieval quarters were joined to larger towns, and new quarters were also developed. The most striking examples of large scale post-medieval interventions in the historic city are the urbanisation around Grote Markt (1757-1766), the Belfort and the first railway station (1838), the Theatre quarter (1824), the Koninklijke Schouwburg and Golden Window (1875) and the creation of the Golden Gates roundabout (1925-1930).

In the second half of the 19th century, some major changes occurred with Antwerp (1795), the new Public Library (1871-1875), the new Post Office and the Koninklijke Bibliotheek (1886), the Casino and the Concert Hall (1906).

Bruges is characterized by a continuity reflected in the relative harmony of changes. At the end of the 19th century, the city began to experience a transformation that was to have a profound impact on the city's future. From the 20th century onwards, the city has undergone significant changes, both in terms of its physical structure and its social and economic development. The city has become a major cultural and tourism destination, attracting millions of visitors each year.

Criteria (vi): The Historic Centre of Bruges was testimony to a considerable exchange of influences on the development of architecture and urbanism, and has remained essentially intact over many centuries. It is one of the best preserved examples of the Flemish Primitives, with many exceptional buildings and structures.

Criteria (vii): The Historic Centre of Bruges illustrates the continuity of an urban site that has been occupied since the early Middle Ages. Historical records of the town administration and regulations are preserved in the city records from the 13th century onwards.

Authenticity

The Historic Centre of Bruges illustrates the continuity of an urban site that has been occupied since the early Middle Ages. Historical records of the town administration and regulations are preserved in the city records from the 13th century onwards. An area of continuous settlement, the Historic Centre of Bruges has retained the original layout of houses and shops, canals, and open spaces. A very specific type of streets and townscapes surrounds the city for the most part. Buildings have retained the original form and function. The transformations that have taken place over time respect the functional changes in the town, and have become part of the city's authentic identity.

The history of the town is well represented in the urban and architectural structures that have been continuously added over the course of time. The buildings are an essential part of the city's historical identity. The city's history is well represented in the urban and architectural structures that have been continuously added over the course of time. The buildings are an essential part of the city's historical identity.

The city's history is well represented in the urban and architectural structures that have been continuously added over the course of time. The buildings are an essential part of the city's historical identity.

Some modern transformations have occurred in the property, but their impact on the whole property is considered minimal.

Integrity

The overall urban structure still represents the medieval "peripheral" model that can be seen on the map of 1449. The ancient city walls were retained in the 18th century and the French Revolution. The city has not been subjected to any significant changes that would affect the overall urban structure. The absence of major modern interventions has helped to maintain the historic character of the town, with the exception of the railway station in the south of the city.

The property includes a number of associated structures, some of which are protected as individual buildings that reflect its commercial and artistic development. The property has been well maintained and is in good condition. The original urban form is still visible and the property is well-preserved.

Protection and management requirements

Since 1996, the municipal Department for Conservation and Heritage Management guides the heritage and urban environment, in collaboration with the regional heritage service. The specific municipal building regulations are very strict and include a non-modifiable agreement when state funding is provided to carry out restoration works.

Around half of all buildings within the historic centre are either listed or registered in the Flemish inventory of built heritage in the City’s Heritage Evaluation Map (Dynamic Instrument), which serves as a policy and management tool. In the case of listed buildings and sites, there is a monetary and binding advice from the regional heritage authorities.

The coordination, communication and the World Heritage property is taken up as below by the municipal Department for Conservation and Heritage Management, in close collaboration with partners on municipal and regional level.

Conservation, restoration or movement and ideas is based on a restoration philosophy and traditions in which the original materials and constructive techniques are the starting point. New interventions in the inner city area occur within the urban historical evaluation and fulfills and respects the historical authenticity. In a risk, new constructions respect existing buildings, heights, positions, materials, etc. of the surroundings. Large-scale developments in proximity of the property remain a possible threat and therefore require particular attention.

As a result, the World Heritage Management Plan was made in 2017, coordinated by the city of Bruges and the Bruges for Conservation and Heritage Management, which is a team of specialists working on the history of art, the history of Bruges in general and restoration philosophy and practice. This Management Plan aims to facilitate appropriate development within agreed constraints in relation to the acknowledged characteristics of historic areas. A UNESCO Support Commission was set up by the city council in 2017, supported the development of a Management Plan in 2019, and continues to provide advice.

In continuation of the Management Plan, Conservation Plans are being prepared, as well as Preservation Plans, Deterioration Survey Plans and a Thematic Spatial Intervention Plan for the historic urban landscape, covering the whole World Heritage property.

Historically and topographically, the city is seen as a mixture of functions. This diversity is an essential urban feature that needs to be preserved and protected. This element, along with the historical urban structure and the specific and diverse architectural characteristics that reflect the evolution of Bruges, are at the core of the future management of the property. However, Bruges is a living city, in which developments and changes should be possible but only in appropriate locations and with respect for the urban morphology of the town, which includes streets, squares and the historic urban centre.

Expansion is possible in the greater Bruges region, which historically and politically was linked with the city ("Bruges Omringd", or the surroundings of Bruges) and Zeebrugge (the respect of Bruges). In order to protect the setting of the property, effective link between the inhabitants of the wider city of Bruges and the property, in terms of planning and protection, are needed and in progress. Important views from and to the property need to be protected and will be incorporated in the urban planning data.

From a visitor's point of view, Bruges has made considerable efforts to manage the impact of visitors. The development of public transport services of high quality and service to reduce the load of the municipal policy in this regard, with a specific attention on events and activities related to the Flemish Primitives.

values and attributes

1. IDENTITY AND CONTINUITY OF AN ACTIVE, LIVING CITY
2. MEDIEVAL HERITAGE
3. REVIVAL
4. ARCHITECTURAL ENSEMBLE
5. MORPHOLOGY
6. FLEMISH PRIMITIVES
7. SKYLINE - RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PROPERTY AND ITS SETTING
<table>
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<th>challenges/opportunities</th>
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</table>
| 1.1   | history and **identity of the city**                                      | • centre of power of count and city  
• one of the most important trading and financial centres of medieval Europe  
• prominent religious centre (monasteries, cathedral, bishop,...)  
• harbour city over the centuries  
• tourist destination for more than two centuries | • vacancy monasteries and churches  
• **mass tourism** ('hotelstop', stop on holiday accommodations, ...) |
| 1.2   | **continuous habitation**                                                 | • inhabitants are essential, stakeholders and ambassadors | • **under pressure** |
| 1.3   | **rich variety of urban activities**                                     |                                                                                          | • **commercial and business activities are leaving the city centre**  
• **monoculture** |
| 1.4   | architecture and urban morphology reflect the historic urban development and activities | • squares with belfry, city hall, marketplaces ...  
• beguinage, almshouses  
• churches and monasteries | • **privatisation/commercialisation of important public buildings and public spaces**  
• vacancy, re-use |
| 1.5   | **other aspects of urban life and activities**                           | • vb. bells organ playing, , traditional clothing, ... |
## Medieval Heritage

### 2.1 ‘Immovable’ medieval heritage
- buildings
- specific parts of a building
- archeology
- focus on style: brick gothic
- materials (brick, mortar, wood, ...)
- structural elements: roof structures, brickwork, wooden floor structures, ...
- finishes: paint, plaster, ...
- wall paintings

### Challenges/Opportunities
- demolition of buildings or dismantling of specific parts of the exterior or interior
- unprofessional restorations
- Building violations
- destruction ‘soil archive’, no registration
- destruction of finishing layers
- Inventory/accessibility/research/creating awareness

### 2.2 ‘Movable’ medieval heritage
- archives and written sources
- private and museum collections (Gruuthuse, ...)
- archeological heritage (ex-situ)
- painting (Flemish Primitives)

### 2.3 Intangible heritage
- processions (Holy Blood, ...)
- legends, ...
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| 3.1  | tradition of **neo-architecture** (mid 19th-mid 20th century) | - important presence neo-gothic and neo-Bruges architecture  
- restoration philosophy and financial support (Kunstige Herstelling)  
- **remarkable visual coherence** (Committee of Urban Beauty)  
- **picturesque city**: Markt, Jan Van Eyck square, ramparts, Gruuthuse, Guido Gezelle quarter,... | - inappropriate renovations  
- demolition, underappreciation 'minor architecture'  
- unsuitable new architecture  
- very attractive city |
| 3.2  | Bruges in romantic literature, painting,... | |

**attributes and challenges**
# Attributes and Challenges

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<tr>
<td>4.1 <strong>Uniform Cityscape</strong></td>
<td>• architectura minor versus maior&lt;br&gt;• <em>Harmony of changes</em>&lt;br&gt;• quality and adapted new architectuur&lt;br&gt;• a very limited amount of inappropriate, unsuitable, large scale interventions&lt;br&gt;• materials, colours&lt;br&gt;• rhythm&lt;br&gt;• roofscape&lt;br&gt;• pavement, street, square materials&lt;br&gt;• quality of the general streetscape</td>
<td>• maladjusted scale of new architecture&lt;br&gt;• maladjusted new architecture or renovations <em>can affect the harmony</em>&lt;br&gt;• contrasting materials&lt;br&gt;• contrasting architecture&lt;br&gt;• solar panels, oversized dormers,…&lt;br&gt;• modern materials for pavements, streets, squares&lt;br&gt;• ‘verrommeling’ or cluttering of the general streetscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 <strong>Specific Urban Typologies and Ensembles</strong></td>
<td>• typical urban buildings (belfry, theater,…)&lt;br&gt;• wealthy city dwellings, palaces&lt;br&gt;• labourers housing&lt;br&gt;• monasteries (church, walled garden, cloister,…)/beguinage&lt;br&gt;• almshouses&lt;br&gt;• …</td>
<td>• loss of unity / demolition, underappreciation ‘minor architecture’&lt;br&gt;• vacancy, unwanted development&lt;br&gt;• slow disappearance of religious institutions&lt;br&gt;• fragmentation</td>
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## Morphology

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</table>
| 5.1 Medieval urban structure | • radio-centric street pattern  
• squares with different functions |  |
| 5.2 Historical layering in urban structure | • Coupure, t Zand, theatre quarter,… |  |
| 5.3 Defensive structures and buildings | • remains of the first city ramparts  
• remains of the second city ramparts—medieval egg-shaped city  
• 4 medieval gates remain  
• remains of d’bastions’  
• defensive canal around the city  
• … | • upscaling transport on water (ships)  
• traffic congestion at the entrances and borders of the historic city, necessary new bridges  
• former bastions are unrecognisable  
• … |
| 5.4 Water | • canals and bridges  
• historic connection with the sea  
• former harbour  
• consecutive remains of water-related trade (Coupure, handelskom, warehouses) | • erosion quay walls and bridges  
• upscaling transport on water  
• under-exploitation |
### attributes and challenges

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| 5.5 streets and squares | • historic trading routes  
• preserved street pattern  
• radial main streets from gates to city centre  
• squares with important buildings and functions  
• ... | |
| 5.6 open areas | • parks  
• monastery gardens  
• private gardens of wealthy citizens | • development, allotment, fragmentation, ... |
| 5.7 parcelling | • preserved small-scale parcelling  
• upscaling in 18th and 19th century  
• remains of medieval domain structures | • upscaling by merging parcels / dismantling partition walls |
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<tr>
<td>6.1 birthplace of the Flemish Primitives</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6.2 important collection in Bruges</td>
<td>• public collections of paintings</td>
<td>• improving accessibility, building a new museum(site)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3 the cityscape of Bruges is depicted numerous times</td>
<td>• iconic views</td>
<td>• research / education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4 the life of the Flemish Primitives: records in archives, where did they live, where did they work, who were their clients? ...</td>
<td>• historic buildings</td>
<td>• accessibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• archives</td>
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| 7.1 A very specific skyline of towers and taller civic buildings dominates the city | • dominant religious buildings  
• dominant civil buildings  
• *architectura maior* versus *architectura minor* | • height of new construction within the world heritage area  
• large-scale development in proximity to the property could adversely impact the relationship between the property and its setting  
• modern wind turbines  
• *identify all significant line of sights* |
| 7.2 approaching the city / ramparts | • clear boundaries with iconic landscapes and buildings (ramparts – medieval gates – windmills...) | • disruptions  
• city borders: very dynamic environment |
| 7.3 historic relationship with the surroundings | • contrast between historic city and (partially preserved) open landscape  
• *iconic views towards the city*  
• historic centre of ‘Brugse Vrije’ | • *identify all significant line of sights*  
• large-scale development in proximity to the property |
Heritage Impact Assessment

Conclusion:

- analysis OUV

- defining values, attributes, challenges and opportunities
  * communication & input government stakeholders

- ambition: basis for all communication and Heritage Impact Assessments (HIA’s)
  * essential
  * guideline for architects, developers,...
  * Stadsvaart, R30, Kruispoort,...