

Dordrecht writes history

Policy concerning the conservation of monuments 2004-2010

Cultural-historic values: integral part of city identity and development

Identity and spatial quality. Perception and image. Every self respecting city reflects on its image and presentation. Cultural history plays an important role in all of this. Furthermore, the interest in cultural history among the public is rapidly growing. Dordrecht now claims a place in the top 5 of Dutch cultural-historic cities and wants to be a pioneer in creating new concepts in this field.

Dordrecht's cultural heritage is exceptional even by international standards. As for the amount of monuments Dordrecht is at eighth place in the Dutch national league. Furthermore, its historic inner city is among the best preserved in the Netherlands with its medieval structure still in place. Its waterfront has been painted numerous times – by William Turner and Aelbert Cuyp for instance. And its spectacular location on a junction of three rivers elicited from foreign travellers poetic descriptions, such as “a swan's nest” or “a galley in the water”. In the field of archaeology Dordrecht has a medieval underground archive unequalled in the whole of Europe.

Central in the council's policy on archaeology and the conservation of monuments is the question: ‘What can monuments and archaeology mean for Dordrecht and what can Dordrecht mean for them?’ The idea is that cultural history makes up an integral part of the city's identity and development. That is why the emphasis is shifting from a subject-oriented and internal attitude towards an external orientation. Nonetheless subject matter remains the basis of all our efforts.

The important new strategic starting points for the city council's current policy are:

- The conservation of monuments both above and below ground make up the total conservation policy and are treated and propagated as such.
- The focus of the city policy is to integrate the conservation of monuments and archaeology at all levels of our policies concerning environmental planning, spatial quality, cultural heritage and sustainable development.
- Top priority is given to promoting monuments and archaeology as part of city marketing, cultural tourism and city economics.
- Enhancing social, political and economic support as well as enthusiasm for both monuments and archaeology by means of communication, presentation and education. This will be done in co-operation with partners in the Hofkwartier project. For instance: a cultural-historic regional centre will be set up together with the Municipal Archive.
- Preserving the cultural-historic values will be put in the context of the present and future city.

On all managerial levels an integrated cultural-historic policy is taking shape. All noses point to the same direction. Everyone agrees that things of cultural- historic importance add extra

value to the city and society, both because of their intrinsic value as bearer of the life history and because of its functioning as part of a bigger entity.

Europe: common themes with regards to cultural heritage

On a European level it is typical that the concept of cultural heritage is broadening:

- from a single object to a landscape
- from heritage to its historic surroundings
- from isolation to integration with its surroundings
- from preservation to incorporating into the present and future city

Apart from its isolated cultural significance the cultural heritage attributes to:

- the quality of life (giving meaning to life)
- the economic value (creating prosperity; regeneration of cities)
- the social value (creativity, identity and inclusiveness)

Cultural heritage plays a central role in sustainable development. It is recognized that new strategies are needed for further inquiries into research, management, partnership and networks concerning the cultural heritage.

The government: top priority to historic valuable qualities and diversity

Spatial quality and cultural identity are at the centre point of Dutch environmental policy. In several policy documents these concepts play an important role. In 1999, for instance, three ministries jointly published the **Belvedere report**. This policy document is entirely dedicated to the relation between cultural history and environmental planning. Its aim is a full integration of historic-cultural values in the drawing up and carrying out of plans.

In the draft **Fifth report on the environmental planning (2000-2020)** both vital and attractive cities and a vital and attractive countryside are important themes in the national policy on environmental planning, while the desire for more spatial quality coincides with the continuous demand for extra space. Changing the built-up area as well as developing new sites in the countryside will go hand in hand with more attention for liveability, security, health, cultural history, the landscape, recreation and sports – in accordance with the starting points of the Malta Treaty. It is to be expected that these aims keep upright in the **Space report** now under construction, which will replace the **Fifth report on the environmental planning**.

Finally, cultural heritage comes up in the report on architecture **Designing the Netherlands**, the cultural policy report **Cultuurnota** and the report **Nature for people, people for nature**, issued by the government.

Province: incorporating cultural-historic values in plans and schemes

In 2003, the province of South-Holland issued a series of maps on **the Cultural-historic main structure of South-Holland**. The series sketches the outlines of the province's cultural heritage. It shows the most important archaeological sites and reveals the historic structures of both the countryside and the cities and gives them a rating. The map is to ensure a sound treatment of the cultural heritage. It is also meant to be a basis and a source of inspiration for future planning.

Another provincial report, the **Judging of Plans**, issued in 2002, is a framework that can be used as a check before carrying out plans.

The Drechtsteden region: identifying distinguishing elements

The 2003 report on environmental policy issued by the joint Drechtsteden focuses on the identity and image of this cluster of cities that form the entrance to the Randstad, the central conglomerate of The Netherlands bordered by the cities of Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht

and Amsterdam. The specific quality of these city's – Dordrecht, Alblisserdam, 's-Gravendeel, Hendrik-Ido-Ambacht, Sliedrecht, Papendrecht, Zwijndrecht -, is their location along the main rivers, amidst a green belt. A spearhead is the aim to create attractive, varied and high-quality housing conditions. In this respect the historic city of Dordrecht offers exceptional housing conditions. An integral environmental policy is starting point, which offers good points of departure for the preservation of cultural-historic values.

Dordrecht: exploiting its historic strength

A major aim in the **City Council's programme** is to make Dordrecht a liveable, attractive and unique city. The common ground with the conservation of monuments and archaeology shows from this quotation:

“An attractive city is worthwhile to visit, especially a city with a historic and cultural potential such as Dordrecht, located as it is at this junction of rivers and surrounded by nature. We will expressly create the city's profile in order to bind both people and companies to Dordrecht and to increase the amount of tourists. In doing so we will co-operate with companies, institutions and citizens who are proud of their hometown.”

These ambitions the council can not fulfil on its own. It needs the help of others, preferably of all citizens of Dordrecht, in any case the owners of monuments and the people who live in them, but also property developers, contractors, people who love art and culture and all institutions in the field of culture and education. Without them there is no cultural history. The council itself will set an example by taking cultural history into account when developing detailed plans that will radically change the face of Dordrecht (such as the Oostpoort, Leerpark, Stadswerven and Hofkwartier projects), or while setting up housing schemes or planning the restructure of old residential areas or industrial estates. For all such plans have effect on the landscape and the cultural heritage.

Both the cultural heritage above and below ground level can tell us something about the history of the site, whether it is an old structure, an old building, a reference to former usage or a historic land use. All these things serve as a source of inspiration or as a starting point for new developments. Restoring old structures may reinstall a location's identity or at least reinforce it.

If the cultural-historic identity has to be the starting point for environmental planning, each plan needs to be preceded by a cultural-historic research. Such a survey gives an impression of what one can expect both above and below ground level. This enables planners to use these values in such a way that the spatial quality will increase and the site will be strengthened. Cultural-historic research is an important instrument to map the development of an area and its valuable elements. It involves research on location as well as a study of source material. All recent zoning schemes have incorporated cultural-historic survey of the areas involved. The research already covers a great part of the island on which Dordrecht is situated. Eventually we aim to publish a cultural-historic map of the entire island.

Dordrecht: Instruments for the conservation of monuments

Protected townscape

In 1988 the government designated Dordrecht's city centre as a protected townscape. It did so not with the intention to freeze the city but rather to prevent large scale demolitions such as those that took place some thirty, forty years ago.

What makes the inner city so attractive is its diversity. It is one big sample card of architectural styles with houses that were been built at the end of the Middle Ages, for example, or just a few years ago – or any time in between. Equally important is its urban structure that has withstood the centuries. Therefore the question is whether new development should be contemporary or have a historic touch. In principle the council prefers the contemporary approach, because then the present contributes to the age old architectural sample card. The same applies for the urban structure. New elements make themselves visible and keep the city alive. It is evident, though, that the historic forms may act as a source of inspiration, but too much copying doesn't do justice to the authentic buildings, as in due course it will no longer be clear what is original and what is not.

It is important, however, that new developments are in harmony with their surroundings in reference to, for instance bulk, lay-out, colour, use of materials and structure.

Public space

Within a protected townscape the public space is equally important. It matters how streets, squares, quays and harbours are furnished. Starting points for furnishing the public space within the protected townscape are:

- keeping the historic structure recognizable
- streets with a similar character should be furnished consistently
- illumination must illustrate the historic structure
- the application of natural materials
- street furniture must show consistency and must fit in a historic setting

The appearance of facades

The council's policy document on the appearance of facades proposes to deal in a coordinated way with advertising signs, roll-down shutters, boarded-up shop windows, canopies and flags – apart from what is already being done about graffiti and street displays, while stimulating turning spaces above shops into living space. The express aim is to improve the way the typical couleur-locale streets look in the near future – the spin-off being increased sales and more visitors.

Investigating interiors

Comparatively little is known about the interiors of monuments. Most descriptions of monuments are limited to the exterior. Sometimes the outside is younger and of less importance than the inside. To make sure that no important structures, traces of the building's construction, ornaments and decorations are lost, the interior makes up an integral part of a historic constructional survey. This survey must be submitted together with the application for a monument permit. For those monuments where no restoration is at hand we are studying on ways to investigate the interior – or parts of it –, to put it on record and to protect the valuable components.

Lists of National Monuments

Dordrecht has approximately 900 monuments of national importance, all of them older than 1940. A National Monument is a single building or a complex of buildings older than fifty years and important because of its beauty, significance or cultural-historic value. In 2001 some 150 objects built between 1850 and 1940 have been added to this list. As a consequence, our knowledge of and care for the younger architecture has grown significantly.

Municipal Monuments

Besides these 900 National Monuments there are monuments listed by the council. The aim of this municipal list of monuments is to conserve objects and structures that are of *local* interest. In this case “age” is less important. In 1997, the City Council agreed to add another 700 objects to this list. These buildings are located all over the island on which Dordrecht is situated.

Characteristic buildings

Apart from all these monuments there are some 400 characteristic buildings within the protected townscape. However, these lack legal status, which makes it hard to prevent demolition, unless the building has been restored with a subsidy. We are taking a close look at this category of buildings now to see which qualify for the status of municipal monument.

Stock-taking of the post-war architecture (1945-1965)

In the next few years we will map the post- Second World War architecture. In this case, too, a main objective is to enhance our knowledge of this period as well as our appreciation. This must result into more cultural-historically inspired plans for neighbourhoods built in that period. Such an inventory will give us particular insight into the architectural qualities of *estates* built in that period. Besides, it will give protection to the most valuable components. The neighbourhoods concerned are the Vogelbuurt, Wielwijk and Crabbehof, but in some older areas such estates exist too, even though they are smaller.

The industrial heritage

A separate category of monuments is made up by factories and other industrial buildings. In this case we are talking about entire historic industrial estates and single buildings, whether or not in disuse, such as mills, water towers, stations, working-class houses, offices and factories or even objects, such as pieces of machinery, sluices, bridges or tunnels.

Conservation of monuments

The use of monuments

The best guarantee for the conservation of a monument is that it has a present-day function. Only then can it be more than an appealing façade. What’s more: it has economic value. However, sometimes having a function harms its monumental value, for instance due to demands concerning safety and comfort. Especially recent stringent fire safety regulations have great impact on monuments, including their interiors.

Views on conservation

Views on conservation change in time. In the sixties, for instance, reconstruction, demolition and rebuilding were common practice. Today the understanding is that much original, historic material is lost in this way. Another new concept is that additions to buildings must look

contemporary in order to enable the passer-by to read the building's history. It goes without saying that this must be done in such a way that no undesired contrasts or dissonances arise. In principle the council rejects reconstruction, demolition and rebuilding. The aim is to conserve original structures and materials as much as possible, even if this results into facades that do not look "neat".

Typical colours of Dordrecht

In making a study into the colours of Dordrecht, the council has set up an innovative project that can serve as an example for other cities. By applying colours that are typical for Dordrecht monuments obtain a coherent and high-quality presence. Furthermore, it makes buildings more recognizable and adds to their attractiveness. The typical Dordrecht palette is a boost for the image of the city centre. Therefore the council advises owners of monuments within the protected townscape who are considering painting their house.

Public monuments

Throughout the city centre there are buildings of exceptional interest for Dordrecht. Sometimes they witnessed historic events, sometimes they housed important people. Often they are just of architectural interest. I'll give you some examples: Huis de Onbeschaamde, 't Zeepaert, the Statenhof, the city hall, the Groothoofdspoort and the Grote Kerk. Unfortunately, not all these buildings are open to the public. However, in order to promote Dordrecht's monuments the council tries to improve this by buying such buildings when possible or giving them another function when a tenant leaves. In short, the council wants to give monuments a function that suits their monumental value.

Legislation

Zoning plan

The council's Conservation and Archaeology Department as a rule provides a cultural-historic paragraph to each zoning plan. This consists of a general impression of the area, its history and scenic values, the archaeological expectations and a rating, a list of all – potential – monuments and a thumbnail sketch of the protected townscapes and other valuable characteristics. Finally, it includes a recommendation of how to deal with the cultural-historic values. In due course this contribution must evolve into a full cultural-historic survey.

The permit system

When a building is listed as a monument it comes under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act or the local act that dates from 1995. However, protection only becomes effective when changes to the building are proposed.

Financing

National monuments: simplified funding

Recently the Dutch government has allotted an extra sum of money to make up for arrears in restoring monuments. But to keep all monuments in good condition, systematic maintenance is equally important. Such being the case, a new, simplified subsidy scheme will be introduced in 2005.

This new scheme holds the owner responsible for the conservation of the monument. In order to stimulate the owner to keep up the maintenance of his house, the two separate schemes for

restoration and maintenance will be geared more closely, or even integrated. In addition, there will no longer be an upper limit to the amount of subsidy one can apply for. And interiors now too, qualify for a maintenance subsidy.

The new scheme makes a distinction between people who are entitled to tax deduction and those who are not. An owner, who is entitled to deduce the costs of restoration, can negotiate a mortgage from the restoration fund. To many owners the scheme is favourable, because the procedures are more efficient and the owner can get support in his hometown.

Municipal monuments: The Municipal Restoration Fund Dordrecht

To stimulate owners of municipal monuments to maintain their houses in the same way, the council has set up the Municipal Restoration Fund Dordrecht, just this year. In doing so the council has created a new and permanent source to pay for the restoration of characteristic buildings and municipal monuments, as instalments and interest find their way back to this fund. The Dordrecht Fund is one of the largest in the country.

Owners who are liable to pay income or company tax may negotiate a mortgage loan. At an exceptionally low rate of interest – five percent less than the market rate, but no lower than 1.5%) – he can take out a loan for the amount that is needed for the restoration or maintenance of his monument, though only for those costs that are subsidizable. Moreover, the interest is tax-deductible. The maximum amount someone can borrow, is half a million euro.

For so-called “fiscally non-relevant owners” the Municipal Restoration Fund Dordrecht offers the possibility to apply for a subsidy instead of a mortgage loan. Institutions that focus on restoring buildings, corporations, church councils, in general terms: non-profit institutions can make an appeal to this fund if they want to restore their municipal monument or characteristic building. For those costs that are subsidizable, thirty percent can come from this fund; in some cases even forty percent. The maximum subsidy is half a million euro.

Presentation

Dordrecht has a better image than some ten years ago concerning the cultural heritage, recreation and shopping. Yet, the city doesn't measure up to Amsterdam, Delft, Maastricht or Utrecht. This doesn't prevent us from striving to attain the top 5 of cultural-historic cities in the Netherlands. With a still tangible medieval atmosphere, an abundance of monuments and an almost inexhaustible archaeological reservoir – that should be no problem.

The Department of Monuments and Archaeology contributes to the promotion and presentation of the city of Dordrecht and its cultural-historic richness. The general public will be made aware of the cultural heritage in an attractive and appealing way and with a feeling for current events.