

**Decision**

## **Decision 32 COM 8B.98**

# **Revision of Statements of Significance and Statements Outstanding Universal Value - Tower of London (UK)**

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Documents *WHC-08/32.COM/8B.Add* and *WHC-08/32.COM/INF.8B1.Add*,

2. Adopts the following Statement of Significance for the **Tower of London, United Kingdom**:

The Tower of London, founded by William the Conqueror in 1066 has Outstanding Universal Value for the following cultural qualities:

Its landmark siting, for both protection and control of the City of London: As the gateway to the capital, the Tower was in effect the gateway to the new Norman kingdom. Sited strategically at a bend in the River Thames, it has been a crucial demarcation point between the power of the developing City of London, and the power of the monarchy. It had the dual role of providing protection for the City through its defensive structure and the provision of a garrison, and of also controlling the citizens by the same means. The Tower literally 'towered' over its surroundings until the 19th century.

As a symbol of Norman power: The Tower of London was built as a demonstration of Norman power. The Tower represents more than any other structure the far-reaching significance of the mid 11th-century Norman Conquest of England, for the impact it had on fostering closer ties with Europe, on English language and culture and in creating one of the most powerful monarchies in Europe. The Tower has an iconic role as reflecting the last military conquest of England.

As an outstanding example of late 11th-century innovative Norman military architecture: As the most complete survival of an 11th-century fortress palace remaining in Europe, the White Tower, and its later 13th and 14th century additions, belong to a series of edifices which were at the cutting edge of military building technology internationally. They represent the apogee of a type of sophisticated castle design, which originated in Normandy and spread through Norman lands to England and Wales.

As a model example of a Medieval fortress palace which evolved from the 11th to 16th centuries: The additions of Henry III and Edward I, and particularly the highly innovative development of the palace within the fortress, made the Tower into one of the most

innovative and influential castle sites in Europe in the 13th and early 14th centuries, and much of their work survives. Palace buildings were added to the royal complex right up until the 16th century, although few now stand above ground. The survival of palace buildings at the Tower allows a rare glimpse into the life of a medieval monarch within their fortress walls. The Tower of London is a rare survival of a continuously developing ensemble of royal buildings, evolving from the 11th to the 16th centuries, and as such has great significance nationally and internationally.

For its association with State institutions: The continuous use of the Tower by successive monarchs fostered the development of several major State Institutions. These incorporated such fundamental roles as the nation's defence, its records, and its coinage. From the late 13th century, the Tower was a major repository for official documents, and precious goods owned by the Crown. The presence of the Crown Jewels, kept at the Tower since the 17th century, are a reminder of the fortress's role as a repository for the Royal Wardrobe.

As the setting for key historical events in European history: The Tower has been the setting for some of the most momentous events in European and British History. Its role as a stage upon which history is enacted is one of the key elements which have contributed towards the Tower's status as an iconic structure. Arguably the most important building of the Norman Conquest, the White Tower symbolised the might and longevity of the new order. The imprisonments in the Tower, of Edward V and his younger brother in the 15th century, and then in the 16th century of four English queens, three of them executed on Tower Green - Anne Boleyn, Catherine Howard and Jane Grey - with only Elizabeth I escaping, shaped English history. The Tower also helped shape the Reformation in England, as both Catholic and Protestant prisoners (those that survived) recorded their experiences and helped define the Tower as a place of torture and execution.

**Criterion (ii):** A monument symbolic of royal power since the time of William the Conqueror, the Tower of London served as an outstanding model throughout the kingdom from the end of the 11th century. Like it, many keeps were built in stone: e.g. Colchester, Rochester, Hedingham, Norwich, or Carisbrooke Castle on the Isle of Wight.

**Criterion (iv):** The White Tower is the example par excellence of the royal Norman castle in the late 11th century. The ensemble of the Tower of London is a major reference for the history of medieval military architecture.

3. Recommends that assessment for statements of authenticity and integrity / statements of protection and management should be postponed to the 33rd session of the World Heritage Committee (2009) awaiting adoption of a methodology and an agreed format for Statements of Outstanding Universal Value for inscribed properties.

Decision Code

32 COM 8B.98

Themes

Inscriptions on the World Heritage List

States Parties 

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Properties 

Tower of London

Session

32nd session of the World Heritage Committee (32 COM)

Year

2008

State of conservation reports

2008 Tower of London

**Documents**

WHC-08/32.COM/24rev

Decisions Adopted at the 32nd Session of the World Heritage Committee (Quebec City, 2008)

**Context of Decision**

WHC-08/32.COM/8B.Add

WHC-08/32.COM/INF.8B1.Add

WHC-08/32.COM/INF.8B1.Add2