

Swedish National Heritage Board - Comments on the detailed development plan for Nobel Center

The Land and Environment Court at Nacka District Court referred the adopted detailed development plan for Nobel Center, along with associated documents, for comment. The court asked the Swedish National Heritage Board to comment on four specific questions:

1. How the implementation of the detailed development plan would affect the area of national interest “Stockholm’s inner city and Djurgården” and the surrounding cultural environment?
2. What is entailed by the assessment in the plan that 12 of the 80 values/expressions associated with the area of national interest would be affected to various degrees?
3. How the listed building of Nationalmuseum would be affected by the implementation of the detailed development plan in its final format?
4. The planning area lies within the area of influence linked to the Royal National City Park. Would the Royal National City Park be affected in any way by the implementation of the plan based on aspects like cultural environment and cultural heritage.

The Swedish National Heritage Board submitted comments on these questions in September 2017.

Comments on question 1

The detailed development plan entails the disappearance of an important representation of one of the expressions of the area of national interest, namely Stockholm’s function as a hub of shipping, trade and industry, as the customs building and the two warehouses are to be torn down. The assessment of the Swedish National Heritage Board is that the area of national interest as a whole will suffer significant damage if this centrally located expression of the cultural environment is erased.

Only a few customs buildings remain within the area of national interest today, which together show the emergence of the Swedish Customs and the historical trade development in Stockholm. Among the remaining buildings are the customs warehouse at Skeppsbron from the 1780s, Stora Tullhuset at Stadsgården and the Värtan customs building built in

the early 1900s. The customs building in Blasieholmen is the only such building remaining from the 1880s. The warehouses are the last ones of their kind still in existence within the national interest. Even if the area affected by the plan geographically speaking only constitutes a smaller part of the area of national interest, the board's assessment is that the national interest as a whole will suffer significant damage if this centrally located expression is erased.

The environment of Blasieholmen, referring to those parts that will be lost, also constitutes an important part of some of the unique characteristics of Stockholm that form the expression of the national interest. Above all, this concerns the water front and the clear outer limit of the industrial era city centre, but it also includes the views from important vantage points. As the low buildings and open spaces with connections to shipping, port and trade activities that give the location its nature disappear and become replaced by a monumental public building and a square, there will be a great change to the open water space around Nybroviken/Ladugårdsviken, which may be perceived as smaller. The clear outer limit of the industrial era city centre, which is another unique feature of the national interest, will be weakened, as the implementation of the plan can be perceived as the city front moving forward at the expense of the water space.

All in all, the change entailed in the implementation of the detailed development plan means that its historical context will no longer be legible due to the erasure of an environment that represents a central development process and historical functions in the city around Nybroviken/Ladugårdsviken. The Swedish National Heritage Board thereby makes the assessment that the damage to the national interest of Stockholm's inner city and Djurgården will be significant.

When it comes to the impact on the existing cultural environment surrounding the site, the Swedish National Heritage Board would above all like to emphasise the importance of maintaining a diverse cultural environment in Stockholm. Regular, everyday environments can also be of great importance to both the understanding of a cultural history context and the experience and perception of a city for the people who live and work in it. The ability to read the gradual development of the city over time from the environment is an asset that should be safeguarded in the effort to attain the environmental objective of a good urban environment. Based in this perspective, the Swedish National Heritage Board makes the assessment that the comprehensive change to Blasieholmen that an implementation of the detailed development plan would entail counteracts both the possibility of attaining the environmental objective of a good urban environment and the national cultural environment objective of diversity.



It is the environment as a whole, and not the individual buildings that is proof of a historical continuity in the use of the location; from naval base, shipyard and port environment to customs and factory environment. An implementation of the development plan that entails the removal of the customs building and the two warehouses entails giving the location a brand new function and the erasure of the historical context that the environment illustrates and adds to the cityscape today. The three buildings that will be demolished according to the plan have not been designated as listed buildings in the Heritage Conservation Act nor been given protection in the provisions of the Planning and Building Act. None of these three buildings have been deemed to be of a corresponding historical building class by Stockholm City Museum. The Swedish National Heritage Board does not make a different assessment regarding the cultural history value of the individual buildings, but would rather broaden the perspective and look at the whole environment created by the three buildings together with the cookhouse, the spaces formed in-between buildings, the port facilities and wharves as well as Skeppsholmen and the surrounding water.

Comments on question 2

The expressions of the values in the national interest area that are affected to a higher degree than others are the ones that show Stockholm's development as a shipping, trade and industry town. The cultural environment impacted by the detailed development plan is the most centrally located representation of this expression today. The warehouses that are to be torn down are the last ones of their kind remaining within the national interest area today. The customs building is the only such building from the 1880s that is left within the national interest area. These buildings will be demolished, meaning that the expressions of national interest that they constitute together with the surrounding environments will be lost forever. As developed under question 1 this damage to the national interest is considered to be significant.

Several of the unique characteristics that also constitute central expressions of the national interest will be weakened or even lost if the detailed development plan is realised. Above all, this concerns the water front around Nybroviken and Ladugårdsviken, views from important vantage points and the clear outer limit of the industrial era city centre.

A decisive factor in assessing the degree to which a change will impact on the values that make up a national interest is the degree to which the location or the environment continues to be characterised by or has the potential to reflect the cultural history context of national interest that was the basis of its designation.

The development plan and its supporting documents state that somewhere between 10 and 15 expressions will be affected. However, the most

important thing in this context is not the number of expressions affected, but the fact that various expressions in such a complex national interest area as Stockholm's inner city and Djurgården are affected to different degrees by a change. The level of impact is due among other things to different values being sensitive to change to different degrees. In accordance with the plan and its supporting documents, there are certain expressions of the national interest that have been deemed in some regards to be reinforced by the planned construction. The expression that will be reinforced according to the development plan concerns Stockholm as the national capital and the tradition of situating high-profile public buildings in central locations close to the water. The ambition to use expressions of the national interest as a point of departure for a change is promising. However, preserving and reinforcing a national interest can entail damage to other expressions within that same national interest area. That is the case here.

The national interest area of Stockholm's inner city and Djurgården contains a diversity of expressions which, when combined, constitute motivation for the area being classed as a national interest. It is not possible within a national interest area to compensate for the loss of or damage to one expression by reinforcing another. Nor is it possible to weigh different expressions against one another. If one expression is erased, the damage is done when it comes to the historical context represented and illustrated by that expression.

Comments on question 3

In the consultation and review stage of the plan, the Swedish National Heritage Board has submitted statements based on the agency's supervisory responsibility for listed buildings. These statements have only dealt with the impact on the listed building of Nationalmuseum.

No change in the height of the Nobel Center has been made from the review to the adopting of the plan. The Swedish National Heritage Board therefore stands by its previous comments relating to the height, volume and placement of the building being an impediment to the possibility of perceiving Nationalmuseum as a solitary structure from a number of important vantage points. The height of the building still exceeds that of Nationalmuseum's eaves and it will therefore be perceived as taller and more dominant than Nationalmuseum when seen from several locations and important vantage points.

The museum park is part of the listed building and affords visitors a view from the museum of the surrounding buildings and environments while also illustrating the water that formerly separated Kyrkholmen from Blasieholmen. When Nationalmuseum was built on Kyrkholmen, the water between Kyrkholmen and Blasieholmen was drained and the museum park

was created. There is a hint of a view of current water areas from the park and they can be seen fully from inside the museum. This contributes to the feeling that the museum is surrounded by water, resulting in interplay with and reinforcement of the Venetian and renaissance features of the museum building. These values would be significantly reduced if the detailed development plan is realised, as would the space and opportunities to recreate and develop the original park design.

Comments on question 4

The parts of the Royal National City Park that are affected by the detailed development plan also coincide with areas and values that are also part of the national interest of Stockholm's inner city and Djurgården. No other parts of the Royal National City Park will to be affected by the detailed development plan. Certain parts of the description of the impact on the values of the area of national interest under questions 1 and 2 are thus also applicable to question 4. This relates primarily to the limit of the industrial era city centre and the experience of the water around Nybroviken/Ladugårdsviken, which are affected from important places and vantage points in the Royal National City Park, including Skeppsholmen, Galärvarvet and from the water areas of Ladugårdsviken and Norrström. The limit of the industrial era city centre, as seen from parts of the Royal National City Park around Ladugårdsviken may come to be perceived as protruding since the volume of the new building will add to the existing building volume and thus move the city front closer to the water. An area that currently constitutes a centrally located, historical, visual and functional transition between the maritime environment of Skeppsholmen and the commercial neighbourhoods of the industrial era city centre will disappear. This means that the legibility in terms of Stockholm's historical development as a port, shipping and trading city will be lost.