



ROYAL NORWEGIAN MINISTRY OF
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND MODERNISATION

The Minister

ICOMOS ISC20C
President Sheridan Burke

Deres ref

Vår ref

Dato

14/2140-64

14.02.2017

International Heritage Alert regarding the Possible Demolition of the Y-block

Dear Ms Burke

I refer to your letter to the Prime Minister of 28 September 2016. I also refer to my letter of 21 January 2016.

As you are aware of, the Norwegian Government decided in May 2014 that the new government building complex will be built between Akersgata and Møllergata. The H-Block (The high-rise block) and the open space on Akersgata will be preserved. In the public debate there has been diverse opinions to whether the Y-block should be preserved or not.

As you also are aware of, the issue of conservation and reuse of the buildings in the government complex was discussed both in the concept evaluation report in 2013 and in the subsequent quality assurance in 2014. The Government's decision to demolish the Y-block was based on both security concerns and the possibility of developing an efficient and compact government complex. At the time of the Government's decision, the values associated with the buildings were well known, for example in the proposed land conservation plan from 2010 for the government building complex and Victoria Terrace by the Ministry of Government Administration, Reform and Church Affairs.

The proposed zoning plan for the new government building complex was circulated and available for public inspection from 24 June to 31 October 2016. The Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation is the planning authority for state zoning plans and it approved the zoning plan for the new government building complex on 10 February 2017.

The Y-block is located in a key area for the development of the new government complex in a number of respects. The planned new building in Area A will be the new main entrance to the government complex from Akersgata. The building will also house various important

common functions for the other ministry buildings. Within the same area, land will also be released for the new park, which will make the surroundings of the government complex an attractive area for the public and visitors. At the same time, Oslo Public Library and the Holy Trinity Church will gain new visibility to enhance their cultural and historical value. Ring Road 1 runs under the Y-block and would need to be extensively reconstructed to ensure adequate security for the government buildings. It would pose extreme technical challenges to preserve the Y-block during a construction period involving the lowering of Ring Road 1. If such work is at all technically feasible, it would be very costly and complicated.

During the consultations on the zoning plan, several people have questioned whether the lowering of Ring Road 1 would provide adequate security even if the Y-block remains. Security assessments performed by the Norwegian Defence Estates Agency do not recommend constructing buildings with ministerial functions above Ring Road 1, even after lowering and reinforcement of the road. There are also requirements for lateral distance from Ring Road 1 to government buildings. Against this background, it cannot be argued that the security grounds for the decision to demolish the Y-block have changed.

You point out that offices in the Y-block are in use today and that this is not consistent with demolishing the block for security reasons. Not all government activities are classified as sensitive under the Asset Protection Regulations. The current activities in the Y-block mainly involve project organisations belonging to subordinate agencies. The ministries have used the offices in the Y-block for brief periods. The current premises used by the ministries contain numerous security challenges that cannot be resolved satisfactorily. The planning of a new government building complex presupposes that all buildings used meet the security requirements for government operations. The Y-block will not satisfy these.

The negative consequences of demolishing the Y-block have been described in a report on cultural heritage under the proposed plan. The impact assessment considered the architectural, cultural and historical value of the building, its relationship to the H-Block and the integrated works of art “Fishermen” and “The Seagull”. Overall, the impact of demolishing the Y-block is considered to be very great, but will diminish if the integrated works of art can be handled in a way that preserves them and allows them to be integrated into the new government building complex.

The zoning plan includes a requirement that an application for demolition of the Y-block must include a technical plan that specifies how the works of art will be treated. A report by the Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage Research (NIKU) in autumn 2016 indicated how the artworks could be dismantled and reused in the new government buildings. The conclusion was that these could be removed and used again. The new use and location of the works of art will be a topic in the planning and design competition which starts 15 February.

Kind regards



Jan Tore Sanner

Gaia Jungleblodt	11 rue du Séminaire de Conflans		
Gaia Jungleblodt	11 rue du Séminaire de Conflans		
Gustavo Araoz	11 rue du Séminaire de Conflans		
ICOMOS Norge Kirsti Kovanan	11 rue de Séminaire de Conflans		
Klima- og miljødepartementet President ICOMOS Norway Marianne Knutsen Statsministerens kontor	Postboks 8013 Dep	0030	OSLO
	Postboks 8001 Dep		