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World Heritage Centre UNESCO  
Attn. Ms M. Rössler  
7, Place de Fontenoy  
75352 Paris CEDEX 07 SP  
France

Broek in Waterland, 20 juli 2017

**Re: threats to the World Heritage 'Droogmakerij de Beemster' (1999) and the World Heritage the 'Stelling van Amsterdam' (Defence Line of Amsterdam, 1995)**

Dear Sirs,

Already for a number of years the provincial and municipal administrations in the province of Noord-Holland (The Netherlands) continue to allow the construction of houses and infrastructure in the World Heritage 'Droogmakerij de Beemster' and within the boundaries of the World Heritage the 'Stelling van Amsterdam' (Defence Line of Amsterdam). The Beemster even was earmarked one of the largest potential building locations in the region to the North of Amsterdam.

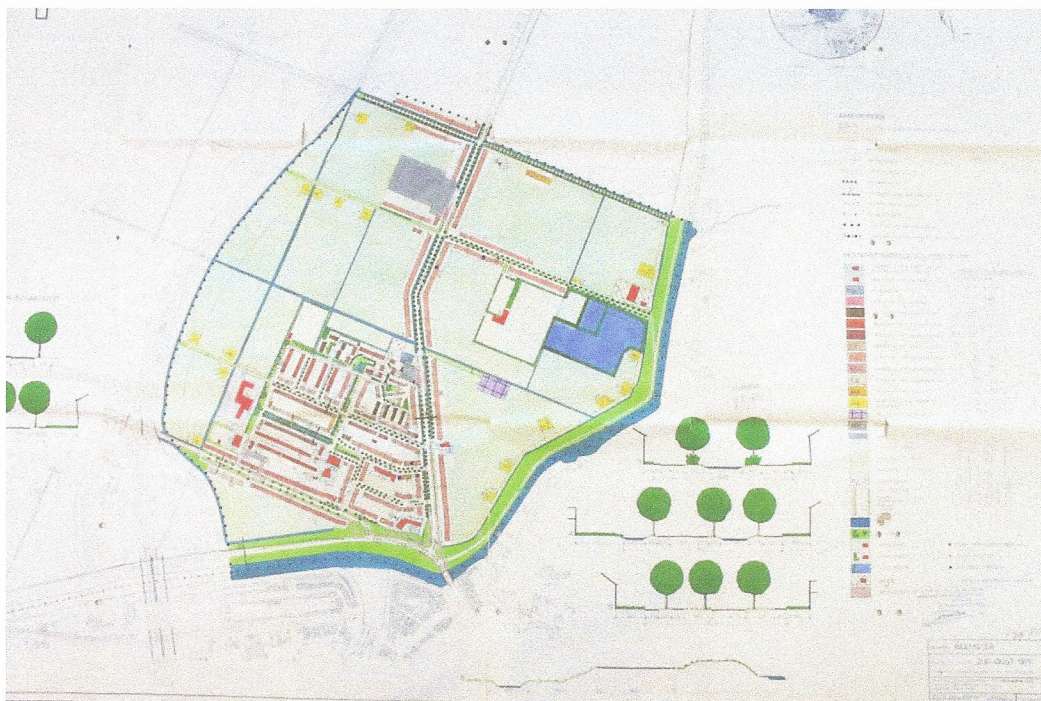
The Stichting Beemstergroen, the Stichting Nekkerzoom and the Stichting Behoud Waterland (hereinafter referred to as 'Stichtingen') are worried about these developments. The plans severely damage the values of abovementioned World Heritage sites.

**Largest building location**

Already in approximately 2004, five years from the date of recognition of the Beemster as World Heritage property, the municipality established a policy to create building opportunities in the Beemster, mainly in Zuidoostbeemster. The provincial Regional plan 2003 no longer prohibited urban developments in Zuidoostbeemster. The borders of the Defence Line of Amsterdam were changed in the provincial regulations. As a result of these changes the area around Zuidoostbeemster was no longer deemed part of the Defence Line of Amsterdam according to the province and municipality. Land was bought by the municipality and/or the V.O.F. Beemster Companie. This company is a joint venture between the municipality of the Beemster and a company specialized in the development of areas.

The map of the zoning plan 'Zuid-Oost 1971' hereunder was valid on the date of nomination and recognition of the Beemster as World Heritage site. From this map it can be concluded that houses are only build along roads (except for the houses which were built in the 1920s and after the Second World War). This way of building contributes a.o. to the visibility of the orthogonal structure of the Beemster and is no threat to the green and quiet character of Zuidoostbeemster. The orthogonal structure and green and relatively quiet character are some of the recognized Outstanding Universal

Values (OUV's) of these World Heritage sites. Zuidoostbeemster has been named traditionally the 'Garden Corner'<sup>1</sup>.



Zoning plan 'Zuid-Oost 1971'. The houses are built along the roads, except for the house-building in the 1920s and after the Second World War.

<sup>1</sup> Brief historical description of the village Zuidoostbeemster on pages 28/29 of the Nomination dossier of 'Droogmakerij de Beemster'

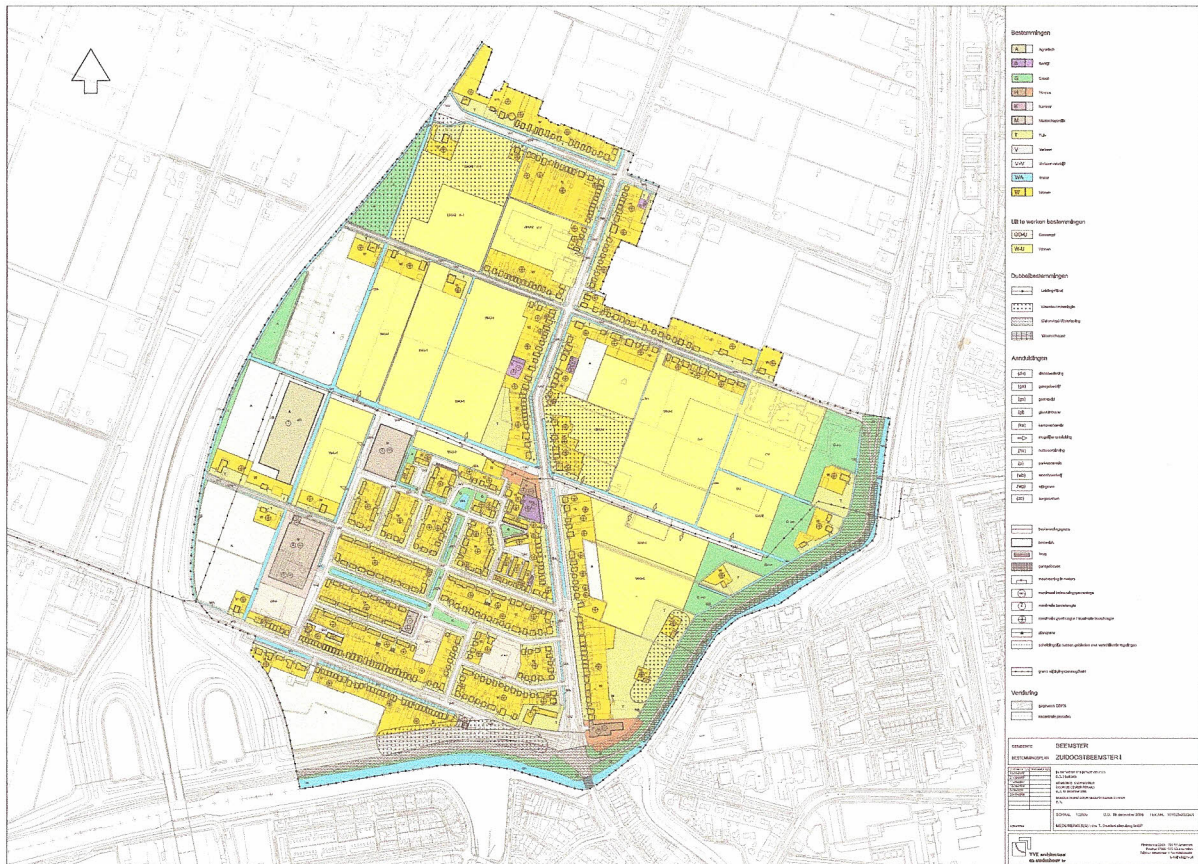
*'From the time it was created Zuidoostbeemster was the place for horticulturalists. This horticulture area was formerly primarily geared toward Amsterdam. The area grew and grew. Over time it started to take the place of the 17th century country estates, which started to disappear at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century. This part of the Zuidoostbeemster is sometimes called the "Garden Corner". The village is situated at the intersection of the Purmerenderweg and the Zuiderweg.*

*From the middle of the 19th century onward, more and more retired farmers from De Beemster settled here. Their many homes (called 'rentenierswoningen') along the Purmerenderweg and the Zuiderweg are testimony to this. The 'rentenierswoningen' are usually one-storey houses with a roof and an elevated midsection and many were built along the Purmerenderweg and the Zuiderweg mainly between 1898 and 1910 and 1910 and 1925 respectively. This location allowed the retired farmers to stay in touch with the activities on the marketplace of nearby Purmerend, which was a regional centre.*

*Zuidoostbeemster expanded in the 1920s and after the Second World War. This expansion process was stopped after 1958, when the Province of Noord-Holland stipulated that Zuidoostbeemster was not permitted to expand any further because of its agrarian function'*



Since 1999 up until now in 2017 the number of houses in village centre of Zuidoostbeemster (area east of the A7) increased with more than 300 houses, roughly 35%. Plans will be made for the construction of an additional 1545 new houses in the Beemster before 2025. Of this number 1065 houses will be built in Zuidoostbeemster. This will result in almost three times the number of houses in Zuidoostbeemster on the east side of the A7 since approximately 1999, the year of recognition of the Beemster as World Heritage property.



**Zoning plan Zuidoostbeemster 2008. The light yellow planes will be filled with houses, roads etc. The building of houses in the area on the left side of the Purmerenderweg (main road with bend) has almost been completed.**

The map above is the zoning plan Zuidoostbeemster 2008, which was approved by the council of municipality Beemster on December 18, 2008. It made the realization of 820 houses possible in and around Zuidoostbeemster. By the realization of this number of houses the Garden Corner will develop as a densely built area with an urban appearance.

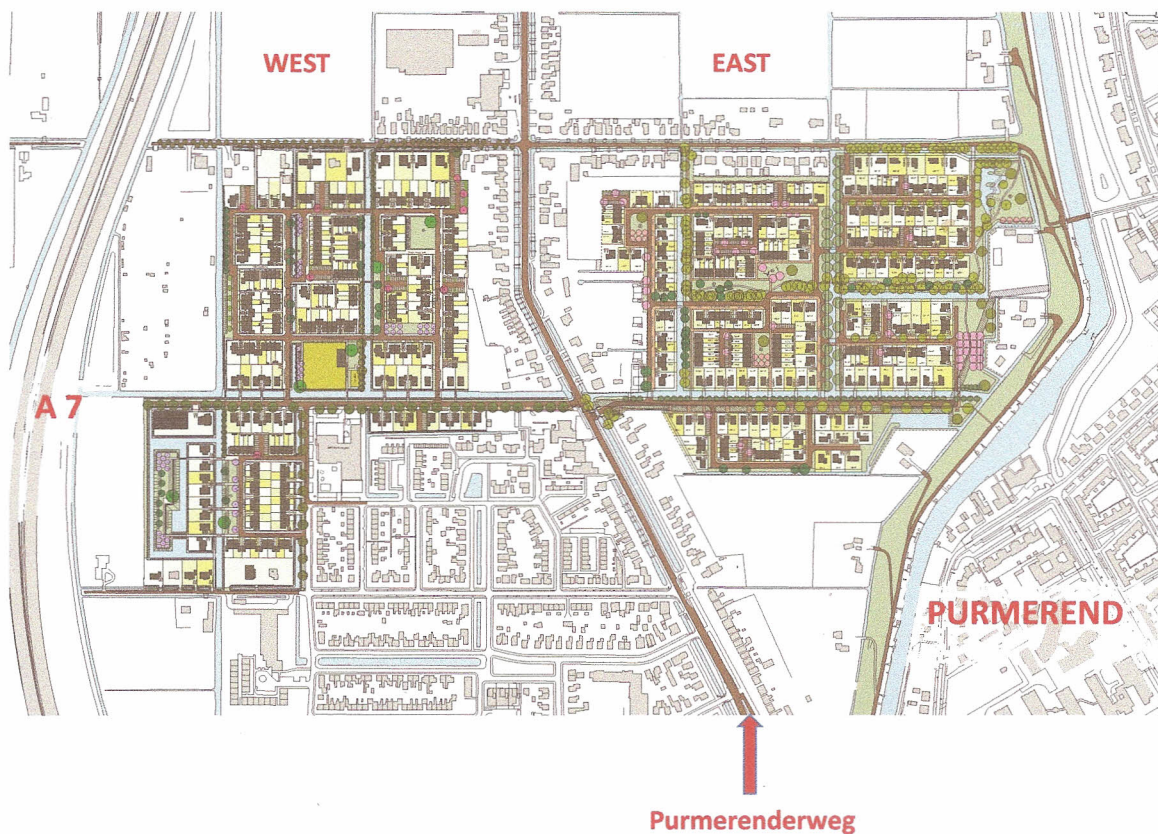
The zoning plan Zuidoostbeemster 2008 has been annulled by the Council of State (Dutch administrative judge) partly, summarized, because of its careless preparation by the municipality. After said annulment, the municipality started the house-building along Boerengroenstraat in conflict with the zoning plan 'Zuid-Oost 1971'. Next it made various new zoning plans for the construction of houses on different plots of land in Zuidoostbeemster, a plan for every plot<sup>2</sup>. According to these

<sup>2</sup> - Zoning plan Appels en perenpad, 2016  
- Zoning plan Benonistraat, 2015



plans the houses were not only built along the roads, but also the green and open spaces within the grid (orthogonal structure of roads and ditches) were filled with houses, roads and parking lots.

The realization of all these small zoning plans will result shortly in the complete urbanization of the area west of the Purmerenderweg up to the highway A7, between the Noorderpad and the old village centre. This area was open and agricultural land according to the zoning plan 'Zuid-Oost 1971'. The municipality continues with the development of new plans for house-building on the other side of the Purmerenderweg despite protests and appeals. The open space east of the Purmerenderweg up to the ring-dike will almost completely disappear as well (see map below). This former rural village will - if the plans are implemented - obtain an urban appearance.



Map which shows the different small zoning plans for house-building on the west side of the Purmerenderweg (main road with bend). The municipality is now working on zoning plans for urban development on the east side of the Purmerenderweg

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- Zoning plan Notaris Appelstraat, 2013
  - Zoning plan Burgemeester Postmastraat, 2013



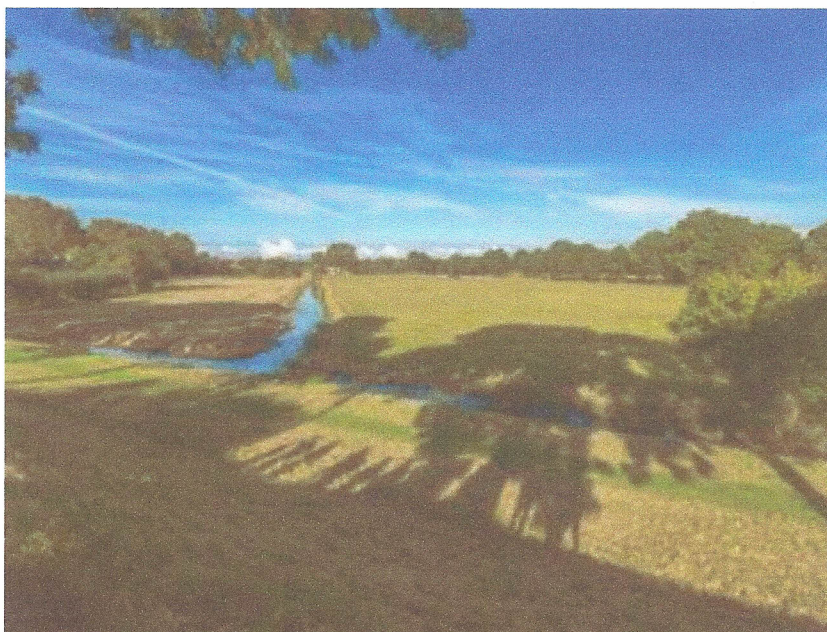
Filling of open spaces within the orthogonal structures with houses in Zuidoostrandbeemster

In our view and in the view of various experts it is evident that this way of building has and will have a negative impact on the OUV's of the World Heritage the Beemster as well as on the OUV's of the Defence Line of Amsterdam. The realization of the zoning plans referred to above already did and will deteriorate some of the OUV's of the World Heritage 'Droogmakerij de Beemster' such as the orthogonal structure, the openness, relatively high roads with trees and (house-)building along roads. In addition thereto the construction did and will damage the green and relatively quiet character of the Garden Corner, one of the OUV's of the Defence Line of Amsterdam. Plots of (agricultural) land in and around Zuidoostrandbeemster definitely disappeared as a result of the house-building.

The municipality argues, summarized, that the construction does not have a negative impact on the orthogonal structure of the Beemster, because the houses within the grid are built in a different style than the houses along the main roads. The building structure has an orthogonal ground plan. According to the municipality the OUV openness is hardly present in Zuidoostrandbeemster. It has been taken into account in urban plans mainly by keeping the sight lines open and by low-rise building. Furthermore there are no relatively high roads in Zuidoostrandbeemster. The municipality is of the opinion that Zuidoostrandbeemster (and the area around it) does not have a green and quiet character anymore. The OUV 'green and relatively quiet zone around Amsterdam' was –according to the municipality- not present in and around Zuidoostrandbeemster at the date of recognition of the Defence Line of Amsterdam as World Heritage property in 1995.

We do not agree with these arguments. The photo hereunder shows that the OUV 'green and relatively quiet zone around Amsterdam' is still present today.





View from the Oostdijk in 2017, the dike between the ring canal/Purmerend and the Beemster. In the distance are the trees in the gardens of the houses along the Purmerenderweg and Zuidoostbeemster. The green and relatively quiet zone between Purmerend/the dike and Zuidoostbeemster, which is within the borders of the Defence line of Amsterdam, will to a large extent be filled with houses. The house-building will damage a.o. the OUV 'green and relatively quiet zone around Amsterdam'

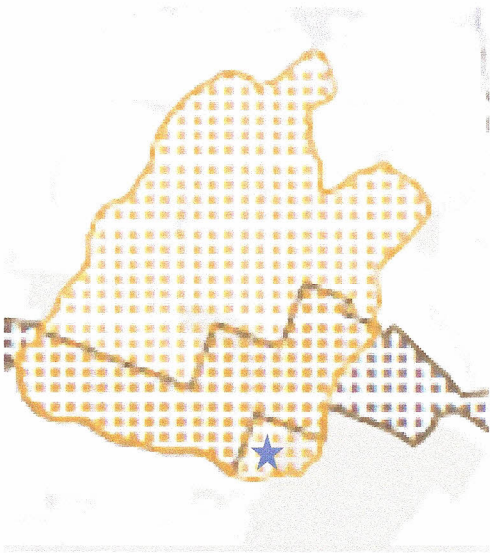
### Protection World Heritages sites

The Dutch administrative regulations do no longer guarantee the preservation of the OUV's of the World Heritage sites the Beemster and the Defence line of Amsterdam<sup>3</sup>. The OUV's of the Beemster are not described objectively in the provincial regulations<sup>4</sup>. This means that there are no or no adequate criteria for testing of zoning plans<sup>5</sup>. In addition thereto, as mentioned above, the boundaries of the Defence Line of Amsterdam were changed by the province. Consequently Zuidoostbeemster is not deemed to be part of the Defence Line of Amsterdam. The OUV's of the Defence line of Amsterdam are neither taken into account in zoning plans for Zuidoostbeemster nor in provincial and municipal policies and regulations.

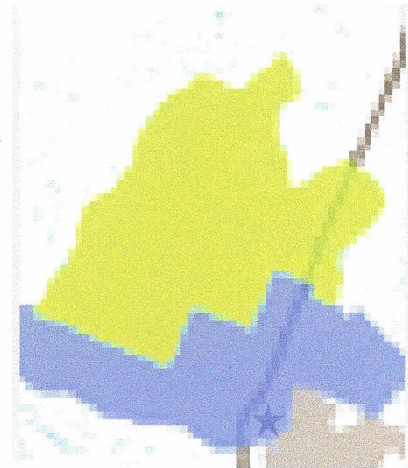
<sup>3</sup> The province of Noord-Holland approved a new Regional plan in 2003. This plan no longer prohibited urbanisation of Zuidoostbeemster. In 1999, the year of nomination, further urbanisation was not possible according to the then valid Regional plan. We refer to a.o. pages 28/29 and 67 of the dossier of Nomination of the Beemster. On these pages is stated: *'..Zuidoostbeemster expanded in the 1920s and after the Second World War. This expansion process was stopped after 1958, when the Province of Noord-Holland stipulated that Zuidoostbeemster was not permitted to expand any further because of its agrarian function...'* and *'An essential point for the spatial quality of De Beemster is that the regional plan does not permit any further urban development in the small area of Zuidoostbeemster.'*

<sup>4</sup> According to national legislation (article 2.13.4 Besluit algemene regels ruimtelijke ordening, 2011) the province has to describe and objectify the OUV's in provincial regulations (Provinciale Verordeningen). Zoning plans have to be in accordance with these regulations. The province has acknowledged that its regulations do not meet the national legislation and is working on an amendment thereof. We fear that the said amendment will not be adequate to protect all OUV's.

<sup>5</sup> The conclusions in the State of Conservation Report of 2009 are subjective as a result of a lack of objective and adequate criteria for proper assessment the damage to the OUV's of the World Heritage property the Beemster. In addition thereto the damage to the OUV's of the World Heritage property the Defence line of Amsterdam has not been assessed.



Provincial map: The border of Defence line of Amsterdam is marked in dark brown according provincial regulations (map 5a of annex 2 of Provinciale Ruimtelijke Verordening). The border of the Beemster is marked in light brown. Zuidoostrand is marked with a blue star



Official national map: The border of the Defence line of Amsterdam is marked in light blue according to Unesco and incorporated in national legislation (Appendix 7 of Besluit algemene regels ruimtelijke ordening). The location of Zuidoostrand is marked with a blue star

### Siteholders and double caps

The municipality of the Beemster is the siteholder of the World Heritage 'Droogmakerij de Beemster' and therefore responsible for the protection thereof. The municipality on the one hand desires to build houses and on the other hand has to defend the OUV's. The municipality incorporated V.O.F. Beemster Companie and land has been bought, so it has a direct (financial) interest in house-building. This desire to build houses and protection-task cannot be combined.

The following example clarifies what we mean. The former mayor of the municipality bought a characteristic 'stolpfarm' in Zuidoostrand. This characteristic building was replaced by a new, modern house. In addition thereto the ditch before the new house was muted visually. From a cultural and historical point of view this ditch was very important: it was one of the main ditches of the copper engraving. Now this former ditch is part of the garden in front of the house of the former mayor. The original ditch is no longer visible. Ditches along roads are part of the OUV's.

Furthermore it must be noted that the mayor of the Beemster is also member of the Board of Directors of the Organization of World Heritage Cities (OWHC) and vice-president of the Dutch branch of the International Council on Monuments and Sites. The latter organization is the official advisor of Unesco for matters related to the World Heritage properties. There is a risk that the Dutch branch will not give a proper advice on matters related to the Beemster and the Defence Line of Amsterdam.



The province is the siteholder of the Defence Line of Amsterdam. Its approval of the house-building in Zuidoostbeemster resulted in a change of the boundaries of the Defence Line of Amsterdam.

So it must be concluded that there is reasonable doubt whether the two siteholders, the province as well as the municipality, can take their responsibility with regard to the protection of the World Heritage sites.

### **Periodic reports**

In May 2014 periodic reports were sent to the World Heritage Committee. From these reports one may conclude that there are no threats to the OUV's. But in the report of the Beemster, house-building was not mentioned as a factor, which might have a negative impact. In the report of the Defence line of Amsterdam, housing has been mentioned. It was concluded that house-building has a negative impact, but that the current effect of the house-building is minor. It must be noted that the effects of the house-building plans in Zuidoostbeemster has not been assessed. After all, the province and municipality do not consider this village as part of the Defence Line, which is not correct.

The reports were mainly completed by the municipality and the province, so by organizations of which it is doubtful whether they take their responsibility with regard to protection seriously as there is unmistakably a conflict of interest situation.

### **Conclusion**

Both World Heritage properties are endangered as a result of changes made by the province of Noord-Holland to the borders of the Defence line of Amsterdam and in Regional plans and as a result of new zoning plans made by the municipality Beemster. Even the Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed incorrectly assumes that the Garden Corner is not part of the Defence Line of Amsterdam.

The siteholders of the World Heritage sites the Beemster and the Defence Line of Amsterdam desire and therefore structurally approve the realization of houses in one of the most unique area's of the world. There is no objective need. These houses can be built in less unique area's in the metropolitan area of Amsterdam. So there is no need to deteriorate any of the OUV's of the said World Heritage sites or take any risk that it will happen.

Until today, no proper assessment has been made of the impact of the ambitious house-building plans on the OUV's of both World Heritage sites in Zuidoostbeemster.

For the above reasons we kindly draw your attention to the threats to these World Heritage sites, more precisely to the creation of further building opportunities in Zuidoostbeemster. We have the following requests to you:

1. to offer support to prevent further deterioration of these properties. It might be an idea to organize a conference with all stakeholders involved to discuss their points of view;
2. to require a Heritage Impact Assessment of the ambitious house-building plans in Zuidoostbeemster;



3. to reconsider the appointment of the municipality of the Beemster and the province as siteholders.

We will be happy to provide you with any further information (orally or in writing) or help to organize a visit, interviews, conference, or any other event that can be helpful to support or further explain the above. Please contact us directly if you have any questions or if you want us to send any documents. We kindly ask you to contact Klaas Breunissen ([klaas.breunissen@wxs.nl](mailto:klaas.breunissen@wxs.nl)) /t: +31 6 46086874) or Rineke Neppelenbroek ([rineke.neppelenbroek@xs4all.nl](mailto:rineke.neppelenbroek@xs4all.nl)) / t + 31 6 53 663266).

Copies of this letter will be sent to the responsible ministers, both siteholders and to the Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed.

Your soonest reply will be appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Stichting Beemster Groen

Stichting Nekkerzoom

Stichting Behoud Waterland

E.K de Vries-Mulder

F. Beekers

C.G.M. Neppelenbroek

CC:

Minister of Infrastructuur en Milieu

Minister of Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap

Provincial Executive of the Provincie Noord-Holland

Mayor and Executive Board of Gemeente Beemster

Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed, attn drs. A.A.M. van Marrewijk