

## **Inscription Social housing manors of Groenegrachten (2003)**

This exercise is about a typical planning problem in the historic city of Groenegrachten which needs to be solved soon. Apart from a basically medieval city center, which is quite well preserved, Groenegrachten features a social housing garden city from the 1920ies which has been inscribed into the World Heritage list 14 years ago and has since then been conserved by the city council of Groenegrachten together with the facility management of the garden city.

The reasons for the inscription were formulated like this in 2003:

### **Criterion (ii):**

The social housing manors of Groenegrachten reflect an important stage in the development of Flemish architecture. It was among the first planned garden city areas of the social housing movement of the 1920ies and was carefully and harmoniously integrated into a basically medieval and Renaissance surrounding of a typical Flemish inner city.

### **Criterion (iv):**

The social housing manors of Groenegrachten was the first masterpiece of the world-famous architect Rudolf Vandekerckhove (1891-1942) who became the most important architect of social housing in Belgium in the first half of the twentieth century. It is the blueprint for a number of following similar estates all over Flanders and the south of the Netherlands which remained basically unaltered through the first 80 years of its existence.

### **Integrity:**

The original function as housing estate for socially imparted members of the Flemish society has been kept throughout the existence of the manors. The original structure has, at the same time, respected the basically medieval city layout of Groenegrachten and has integrated the key architectural elements of the surrounding old town, including the 14<sup>th</sup> century belfry which is located next to the garden city.

### **Authenticity:**

The manors have been inhabited by families of the local community with special needs since their erection in the 1920ies. Despite the poor income situation of the owners, all key elements of the original architecture have been carefully preserved. Up to their last restoration in 1998, the original materials of the buildings have been continuously used, thus giving both inhabitants and visitors a vivid illustration of the original architectural masterpiece. All elements of modern housing have been carefully integrated, which is an exceptional example for the possibility of keeping social housing up to date at the same time as respecting the original architectural ideas of the 1920ies.

### **Problem:**

An international investor is planning to put up a 75 m tall highrise 600 m away from the core zone of the manors, located in the sight axis from the bottom of the belfry through the main gate which marks the entrance to the garden city, which has been used as a congregation house for the inhabitants of the manors of Groenegrachten.

**Your task:**

You have two minutes time to present your evaluation of the planned highrise to the municipality council of Groenegrachten. Half of the groups shall find reasons why the highrise is damaging the Outstanding Universal Value of the social housing manors of Groenegrachten, the other half shall find reasons why this is not the case.

In the end, the city council of Groenegrachten will decide which of the two opinions seems more valid to them. Their opinion will rule out on the question if the highrise may be built or not.