

# URBAN PLAN FOR THE PROTECTION AND REHABILITATION OF THE HISTORIC CITY CENTER OF LIÉRGANES AND ITS SURROUNDINGS.

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CATEGORY C : PLANNING

## INTRODUCTION

It can be argued that Historic Sites constitute one of the most complex heritage entities of those that make up the Historic Heritage at present. And this is so because in these areas, it is as important to ensure the survival of their cultural or patrimonial values as to maintain the activities, uses and relationships that are inherent in the definition of a town or city; if not, they are reduced to mere villages animated only by the presence of tourists.

Both the Law of Spanish Historic Heritage and the Law of Cultural Heritage of Cantabria entrust the safeguarding of Historic sites to the writing and approval of an urban planning instrument that allows to combine the renovation and evolution (adaptation) of our towns with the maintenance of the cultural values that characterize them, while they promote and disseminate their appreciation and improvement: the so-called "Protection Plans" of Historical Sites.

With the drafting of a Plan for the Protection of Historic Sites, three fundamental objectives are achieved:

- To unite in a single document of normative character the urban ordering that must regulate the scope with patrimonial values of the town.
- To guarantee that urban planning is compatible with these values
- To avoid double administrative authorization -cultural and local- by delegating the competences of Culture, after the approval of the plan, to the City officials.

The planning of protection of the Historic Site not only establishes an urban planning compatible with the patrimonial values that it possesses, but, and this is what really gives it the character of an urban plan of protection, it empowers them and manifests them in such a way that the population recognizes them, makes them his own, is proud of his cultural identity and collaborates in its maintenance and improvement.

It has been proven that only what is known and valued is preserved; and the danger of our local heritage, except for that of a certain monumentality, is that due to its proximity and daily life it tends to be undervalued. It is often heard that something was "old and not very functional", and thus magnificent examples of popular architecture have fallen or squares and streets have been transformed. The concept of "monument" as a singular element of great artistic historical value and the axis on which the historic patrimony of a people revolves, has been abandoned for a long time and changed for the "cultural site", defined as all "those elements that have a relationship with the history of the town." At present, the tendency is to value the site and its context beyond its immediate surroundings, and we speak of "cultural landscapes".

In relation to this context, what is being asked of the protection plans and in particular of the Special Plan of a Historic Site, such as Liérganes?

First, a study that is not limited to a mere historical tour of the most relevant events that took place and gave its reason of being to the municipality, but also analyses its evolution in a specific territorial context, as a built environment, recognizing the urban plots and their conformation in time, singularities, characterizations, significance and identity (reason of being) of each public space, distortions created by their singular elements, etc. it associates its architectural typologies

with each historical moment and it values the elements that have survived to this day, regardless of their state of conservation or ownership.

Likewise, it must identify which are the economic, religious, celebration or relationship activities that are part of the identity of their culture and their incidence or relationship with the people. This allows us to discover and establish the significant patrimonial values that belong to the historical site and that are the basis for adopting the most appropriate planning regulations.

Another very important study is the recognition and analysis of the current circumstances in which the historic site is located, its state of conservation, the degree of intervention to which the buildings have been subjected, the main activities that are currently taking place, the role of seasonal tourism, real estate expectations, the state of infrastructures, accessibility and parking, equipment, cultural activity... Also and given that the historical site is only part of the municipality of Liérganes, the role played by this area in relationship to the rest of the municipality, in terms of growth, borders, population and activity flows, connectivity, visual perspectives...

It is from that moment on when you can begin to define the building parameters, which should always aim to maintain the urban and architectural structure of the whole settlement, considering exceptional the replacement of buildings, and avoiding urban remodelling unless it is very justified and it means an improvement in relation to the heritage or the environment.

To the city-planning regulations compatible with the Historic Site must be added a Catalogue of the unitary elements that conform this site, which includes not only the buildings ~~built~~ but also the open spaces, both exterior and interior, significant structures, as well as the natural components that accompany them. For each of these listed elements, the types of possible interventions are defined, granting an adequate level of protection as well as options of sustainable functionality.

This specific Historic Site is mainly made up of a non-monumental vernacular heritage and it is essential for its maintenance the definition of adequate policies for the rehabilitation of its architecture, public spaces and activities. That is why the Special Protection Plan incorporates measures to promote the rehabilitation of its heritage, and in particular that of a domestic scale.

The extended period, 30 years, passed since the approval of the current Subsidiary Regulations (Rules) of 1987, means a notable disparity gap between the inherited situation and the new needs of the Artistic Historic Site, but also a change of perception and appreciation regarding the cultural and natural heritage and the measures to adopt for its conservation and improvement.

These changes offer a concrete perspective on the opportunities of the Special Plan for Protection and Rehabilitation of the historic artistic quarter of Liérganes and its municipal and natural environment:

- The diversification of its urban attractiveness and development potential, generated by the increase in mobility, the improvement of accessibility and its proximity to the metropolitan area of Santander.
- The growing social interest in the architectural and cultural, natural and environmental values associated with the built heritage of the site and the enhancement of Liérganes, recovering the prestige on a regional scale that already had in the past.
- The perception of environmental values, urban quality and the physical and natural environment as a resource and attraction difficult to reproduce; especially the relationship of the neighbourhoods of the Liérganes site with the Miera River and its immediate, natural and urban environment.
- In short, a new orientation of the purposes and contents of the new Special Plan with two different but complementary directions.

- a) The Protection and Rehabilitation and Promotion of the Cultural Heritage.
- b) The Detailed Urban Plan within the Historical Site in close relation with the General especially in relation to the new developments in the surrounding zones-of protection and reciprocate influence of the site.

With this view, the mission of the Plan is not only to “Protect”, the buildings, spaces and other elements of interest, but to “add value” to them.

To increase the Heritage, means to advance on that ranking of towns and villages that belong to the selective group of cultural and historic landmarks of local, regional or international interest.

The process of formulation and approval of the Special Plan from its commission, by public tender, until its final approval has involved 14 years of work and several stages of neighbourhood involvement, or statutory approvals, by the Municipality, Cultural, Planning and Environmental authorities.

Once approved, the Plan is a very useful tool, not only to ease the processes of small changes vital for the normal life of a settlement and his inhabitants, but even more so, to assist the residents, local organizations and institutions of all kinds, to fully exploit the advantages open to Cultural Sites.

It is a very comprehensive and complete document that allows the City Council to control any intervention within the delimitation of the Historic Site and in this way preserve enhance and increase its architectural and landscape values for future generations.

The prizes awarded to this Plan, add to the promotion of Lierganes:

- Premio de Urbanismo Español 2017. CSCAE
- Premio Gubio 2018. Mencione Especial