

The 7 Most Endangered 2016

Project Fact Sheet

<u>Project Title</u>	Convent of Saint Anthony of Padua, Cacarès
<u>Location</u>	Garrovillas de Alconétar, Extremadura, Spain
<u>Initial input date</u>	09.2018
<u>Current status</u>	Under consideration
<u>Latest update</u>	09.2018

Summary, status, prognosis

The Convent of Saint Anthony of Padua, on the outskirts of a small town: Garrovillas de Alconétar, Extremadura, Spain is at risk of terminal decline. Arguably, it is already in terminal decline.

The earliest convent buildings date from the turn of the 16th Century and the site developed in three phases over the next three hundred years. It is centred on a very substantial chapel, which might be more accurately described as a church. In its final iteration, the Convent incorporated the usual Chapter House and other religious offices, double-level cloisters in two different architectural styles, cells for the nuns, a refectory, an infirmary, and an elaborately decorated side chapel dedicated to Cristo de las Injurias.

However, in the early 19th Century the social, political and economic landscapes changed, and the site of the Convent was deconsecrated and sold. The buildings were then used for a range of artisanal and industrial purposes including a sheep shearing station, weaving shed and forge. The core church building is mostly complete, although it has lost its outer roof structure, and much of the interior detailing has disappeared, either through neglect or theft. The unusual double height cloisters have partly collapsed, and a substantial part the other structures do not exist above the ground floor. The site as a whole is unsafe. However, the quality of the original architecture and construction, the range of architectural styles of the different phases, and indeed the scale of the site for a relatively remote part of Spain, make the Convent worth preserving.

Rescuing this Most Endangered nominee so that it could lead, and be a focus for, an economic and cultural renaissance in one of the poorest and least developed districts of Spain, is clearly desirable. However, there are three questions. Should the Convent should be an active or passive element of that renaissance? Does the Convent need to be restored or only stabilised? Can the convent contribute to the revenues needed to make the renaissance physically, financially and economically sustainable?

Classification: **C Some progress**

Basic data

Nominator:

Hispania Nostra.

Brief description:

Historical buildings, place of worship, historical heritage site.

Owner:

Multiple owners, but a significant proportion held by the Junta of Extremadura which is seeking to acquire the rest.

Administrator:

Department of Culture, Junta de Extremadura

Context, description

Extremadura is one of Spain's poorest and least densely populated regions, and Garrovillas, although important locally, is itself a relatively poor small town. However, it is proud of its history and noble connections, and there is strong local support for the use of the region's long cultural and natural history as motors of economic regeneration.

The Junta recognises the importance of history and culture as a source of development, and has supported a number of initiatives, including the establishment of an extensive trail offering linked, restored historic sites and accommodation. This runs close to the Convent and the synergies between the existing investments and the Convent are self-evident.

Although the site is the responsibility of the regional Junta, its day-to-day protection and management lies with the local Commune, which has its own plans and vision for the future of the Convent. The extent to which the objectives of the two administrative bodies are aligned is not fully clear.

Issues, problems, threats

The site has been deteriorating two centuries. The perimeter of the buildings has now been secured, but there is a continuous deterioration in the structures, and evidence of subsidence in critical areas, particularly the ambulatory. Similarly, while the chapel ceiling and arches are mostly still standing, this is only because of the hot, dry climate. The loss of decorative and structural stonework, etc. has been halted, but there are large areas of the site which may only be visited under supervision due to the risk of personal injury.

The town lacks the resources to undertake any renovation work, and the Junta will only act when it controls the site. The site was originally sold in two parcels. However, over the centuries each parcel was split between heirs and the number of beneficial owners increased to a substantial number. The Junta has already acquired some of the lots and, at the time of the site visit, was in the process of negotiating with the remaining proprietors as a group.

Once the ownership problem has been resolved, the Junta will move forward to develop its own vision of the site. This may or may not be aligned with the objectives of the local Commune.

Status pre-mission

At the time of the mission, the only recent development on the site had been the construction of security fencing to keep people off the site. This was primarily for reasons of public safety, but also to prevent theft of dressed stones from the site.

Summary EN/EIBI mission recommendations, action programme:

As presented in the Nomination and views expressed during the site visits, three quite different scenarios needed to be considered: Nomination, Stabilisation and Redevelopment, and within the “Stabilisation” a range of options would be possible.

Nomination – The scope of work would be modest and could perhaps be described as a “taster”: giving a flavour of what the site could achieve. The proposal has two components. Firstly, there is the temporary stabilisation, mainly of the double cloisters, to provide a safe working environment for the work that is to follow. The second component is the clearance of the site using volunteer labour, with the volunteers being housed and fed by the people of the town.

Three costs would need to be covered: a) the stabilisation costs, b) the costs to ensure that the site would be a safe working environment for volunteers, and c) the funding of supervisory personnel to organise and direct the works, maintain safety and security, and identify the usable and re-usable from the waste. However, these costs are not large, of the order of EUR 30,000 plus volunteers, and could be self-liquidating if volunteers were to make a contribution to the experience. This stage would not require a major fund-raising effort.

Stabilisation – would take the existing structures and rebuild them to extent that the existing material resources allow, reconstructing areas where necessary to render the site safe and secure to be visited. More importantly, the works would leave the structure in a condition to withstand weathering for a period of, say, 25 years, including re-roofing the chapel, the double cloisters and the religious offices. As a first estimate, the cost would be EUR 4.75 million.

Redevelopment – The Commune’s preferred option - completely redevelop the Convent at a cost of not less than EUR 9 million. The objective of the proposal is to use the redevelopment of the Convent as a motor of regeneration for both the local community and the local economy. Within a recreated historic structure, there would be sleeping accommodation, catering facilities, and performance and meeting spaces. The closed public spaces would be fully heated and air-conditioned and designed to draw in visitors and local people to use the facilities. This would be the most expensive option, but would also probably have the potential for the greatest economic impact. What is difficult to predict at this stage is whether it would also be the most economically efficient option.

Progress on recommendations and latest status

During the last year the Junta has contacted and agreed with all the owners the donation of its part of the Convent. Legally the Convent is under Junta’s ownership and are planning an urgent intervention of cleaning and consolidation for 2019.

Impact of EIBI/EN intervention

Nominator's Comments:

Not applicable.

Appraisal Team's Comments:

Not applicable.

Lessons learned:

Not applicable.

Data on inputs & timing

Dates, Participants

Appraisal:

Nomination form submitted	2016
Project selected as 7 ME:	2016
Questionnaire from EIBI	August 2017
Response to questionnaire	September 2017
Appraisal mission	25 - 28 September 2017
Participants:- EN EIB Institute	J. Alonso C. Thomson
Feedback letter post mission	N/A
Response to further questions	N/A
Technical report issued	November 2017

Follow-up:

Request for progress report	N/A
Response on progress	N/A
Follow-up visit	N/A
Participants: EN EIB Institute	N/A N/A
Report on follow-up visit	N/A
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