

# Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, Mumbai

## Managing a World Heritage Site

VIKAS DILAWARI

### ABSTRACT

*Getting a World Heritage site nominated is a moment of pride and joy, but it also brings in the responsibility of commitments for its long term protection. The Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (CST) station is an excellent case study, which reveals the opportunities and threats that an individual site is exposed to in an urban setting with high real estate development pressures and being one of the most functional World Heritage site in the world. It also illustrates that if the plans and commitments laid out during the process of World Heritage nomination are carried out as promised, then the site can be looked after well.*

### INTRODUCTION

The World Heritage site nomination process is an emerging specialised discipline in the conservation field. It is very interesting from a point of view of the varied challenges and opportunities it offers in context of developing nations. This is different from the perspective of developed nations where conservation has been integrated into main stream urban policies and there is provision of specialised funding as well as legal

Vikas Dilawari is the Head of Conservation Department, Kamla Raheja Vidyanidhi Institute for Architecture and Environmental Studies, Mumbai. He is a conservation architect; several of his conservation projects have received UNESCO Asia Pacific Awards in the past decade. Vikas is currently a co-opted member of the Mumbai Heritage Conservation Committee and a member of the Interim Executive Committee of ICOMOS-India.

frameworks to encourage its implementation. In India, slowly and steadily the government is also involving itself in the nomination of World Heritage, as seen from the support of nomination of World Heritage cities including Ahmedabad, Delhi and Mumbai. However, at the same time, other government departments, particularly those responsible for Urban Development have been drafting policies for redevelopment that are often detrimental to the efforts of nomination itself.

India like so many other South-east Asian countries is at a cross-roads where it has to choose between the path of conservation and sensitive development in place of insensitive redevelopment. In this aspect, World Heritage site nominations can help in achieving the balance. World Heritage sites if integrated within the master plans and planning process of cities can be used as asset and capitalised accordingly. Varying protection can be ensured to the main site and its buffer zone like the proverbial 'carrot and stick'. This way, citizens can take pride, bring awareness and capitalise on the cultural potential of World Heritage sites and at the same time facilitate development. Getting World Heritage site status helps in building an international pressure to ensure that commitments given by the State Party are not diluted as was seen with CST Railway Station previously known as the Victoria Terminus (VT) Station.

The nomination dossier for the CST Station was prepared in 2003 and in 2004, the same was declared as a World Heritage site. A decade is nearly over and it is time to reflect on the opportunities and challenges that it faced. This is the only other individual 19<sup>th</sup> century Gothic Revival building apart from Westminster Palace to be listed as a World Heritage Site.<sup>1</sup> This would also perhaps be most frequented or used World Heritage site in the world since it is a functional railway terminus building, located in one of the most expensive real estate areas in the world. Hence the challenges and opportunities for this site are very different from other World Heritage sites.

#### **BACKGROUND OF THE NOMINATION PROCESS OF CST**

The Indian Railways became amongst the early patrons of conservation in India and undertook the decision to self-nominate the CST Station as a World Heritage Site. The Railways had been inducted in the process of World Heritage sites due to the inscription of the Mountain Railways of India as a World Heritage site in 1999. However, the attempt of nominating the CST

failed since it initially lacked professional inputs. Thus, the Indian National Trust for Arts and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) Mumbai Chapter was recommended by International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) along with an expert team to undertake this work. On the behest of the Central Railways the team helped in preparation and submission of the nomination dossier to UNESCO World Heritage Centre at Paris. INTACH Mumbai Chapter had previously prepared the Elephanta Caves Management Plan. The CST main building had undergone restoration and repairs several times in the past two decades and its conservation has raised several important questions regarding varying philosophical and scientific approaches and also raises the issue regarding independent monitoring of conservation work.

#### **THE CHANGING CONSERVATION SCENARIO IN MUMBAI**

The conservation scenario in Mumbai has also changed drastically in the past decade. Mumbai, which was the city that pioneered heritage regulation in the country in 1995, diluted its own laws in 1999 through a notification. Furthermore, with the assistance of a circular in 2009 from the Urban Development (UD) Department all Cess Properties (buildings built prior to 1969 and which pay cess or tax to the government) and Cess Grade III Properties in the buffer zone of the CST could undergo redevelopment.<sup>2</sup> These were also removed from the purview of Mumbai Heritage Conservation Committee (MHCC) and redevelopment could be approved by the Municipal Commissioner's permission for heights above 24 metres. This change in legislation resulted in a lot of redevelopment, which was a direct threat to landmark heritage sites such as the urban context of CST. Eventually, the buffer zone guidelines of the CST as a World Heritage site came to its rescue. Now, only operational buildings are allowed in the area and the building height of a new structure cannot be greater than the height of the concourse roof ridge, thereby retaining the urban setting and the landmark quality of the site.

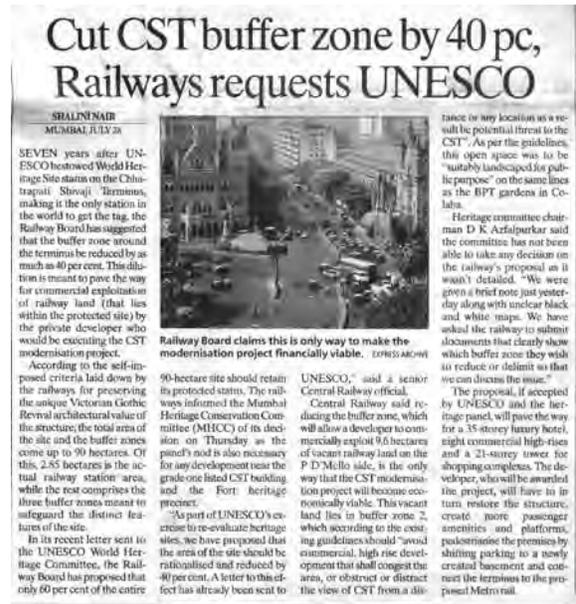
The State Government did not initially gazette the additional listed buildings and precincts despite the studies being prepared and the list was finally notified only last year (2012) by the Brihan Mumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC). This clearly reflects the ongoing conflict between heritage conservation and development, especially from the perspective of governance. It is here that World Heritage site nominations and inscriptions can assist the site's

conservation through building international pressure via UNESCO.

**CST AS DESCRIBED IN THE NOMINATION DOSSIER**

The CST Station is the first railway terminus building in the Subcontinent and the first in Asia too. It is one of the finest Victorian Gothic buildings in Mumbai both in grandeur and in detailing as compared to other Gothic Revival buildings in the city and the country. Its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) is encapsulated in both in its exteriors and interiors and it still has its authenticity preserved to a large extent. The CST is a commercial palace that epitomises the glory and romance of the railways. It was a commercial venture that was extremely profitable, both for the West and for India. The building represents British architectural skills combined with unique Indian craftsmanship, which is evident in the abundant carving and other stylistic embellishments. It was seen at the time as a statement of Indo-British endeavour. Rudyard Kipling's father, Lockwood Kipling, who was responsible for much of the sculptural embellishments, was actively promoting Indian craftsmanship. The statue of Progress on top of the dome is a tribute to the vision of those

who built it. It expresses the confidence of the local community that commissioned and contributed to this magnificent building.



*Newspaper coverage on the Railways requests to UNESCO to reduce the extent of the buffer zone of CST*



*The location of Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus in Mumbai*

### COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

CST is rated as one of the six best railway terminuses in the world; the other being St. Pancras Station in London, Penn Station in Philadelphia, Helsinki Railway Station, the Gare (now Musee) D'Orsay in Paris and the Amsterdam Main Railway Station. It is amongst the three best buildings designed by the British in India, namely the Victorian Memorial in Kolkata and the Viceroy's Residence in Delhi. With the development of air travel, railways were affected all over the world and many stations in the United States, such as the Union Terminal-Cincinnati and others in Europe like the Musee D' Orsay, Paris, declined due to fall in railroad passengers.

This led to the disuse of the terminals and their modification for other uses. However, even after 125 years the CST is very much a bustling station and in constant use as a station and head office of the Central Railways. In comparison with other railway stations of Europe and United States it is still one of the grandest stations and perhaps the only one to have a dome. The covered station caters to the one of largest commuter populations in the world, ranging from 3 to 3.5 million a day.

### PRESENT SCENARIO

Over the past few years, CST Station has been in the news as the Railways are keen to develop the buffer zone for commercial activity with an iconic tower. Proposals for this were submitted to the local heritage committee but these were not granted permission. This brought up a dilemma for the Railways to either retain World Heritage status and curb development or forgo the coveted World Heritage inscription. Furthermore, a few of the repair and restoration works undertaken also came under criticism as these had not been carried out scientifically; such as introducing copper foil stained glass in place of the authentic lead light stained glass and so on.

Being a functional building, housing an important lifeline of the city, the CST's main function is to cater to the users. With the increase in population, several other modes of transport are likely to be integrated to the main station including the metro and mono-rail services. These are most likely going to further add to the challenges facing the Station.

The recent terrorist attack on 26<sup>th</sup> November, 2008 in which several people were killed and another iconic



*CST in its urban context*

heritage building in Mumbai- the Taj Mahal Hotel was damaged, exposed a new threat that needs to be addressed. These terror attacks were the first one on any World Heritage site in India. Though the CST was not damaged, the threat of terrorism is one that needs to be examined critically.

The nomination dossier that was prepared for CST addressed many of the issues and concerns of site management as stipulated in the Operational Guidelines. It is interesting to see that the protection management did address several issues, but was unable to safeguard the likely threats of development pressure because of weak implementation. Had the systems and recommendations been implemented the situation would not have become so complicated. While Railways and local authorities were contemplating new development in the buffer zone and proposed reduction in the buffer zone boundary, they were subsequently advised to withdraw this proposal of boundary modification by the Ministry of Culture in 2012. It is recommended that Railways should constitute a stakeholders committee.

The nomination dossier had clearly stated formation of the following committees:

- *High Powered Steering Committee (HPSC):* The formation of the HPSC is essential for reviewing any mega-plans around the CST, including its buffer zones and outlining the broad principles and policies to protect the building and the context within which it is situated.
- *Formation of an inhouse Maintenance Committee:* The committee will consist of Senior Deputy General Manager, Chief Engineer– Works, Chief Electrical Engineer – General, Chief Signal and Tele-communication Engineer, and Chief Public Relation Officer who would be the coordinator. This committee will also include a trained conservation architect as a permanent invitee. Depending upon the necessity, an architectural historian, urban designer and a structural engineer can be consulted to monitor the work. The Railway authorities have agreed that a qualified and experienced conservation architect will carry out any major works or interventions.
- *The Executive Committee for day to day maintenance:* The day to day maintenance of this building is also a major activity. This committee will undertake periodic inspection every two months. To ensure proper conservation during day to day activities a list of ‘do’s and don’ts’ shall be circulated for the guidance of the executive committee.

These committees are essential to ensure the smooth implementation of the management plan for CST. It is essential to learn that all procedures of the commitment given while nominating are followed.

#### **GUIDELINES FOR BUFFER ZONES**

Various guidelines to regulate the land-use and building heights of the buffer zones have been identified.

*Buffer Zone I (Sub-precinct II):* is defined by Dadabhai Naoroji Road on its West, W. Hirachand Marg on South, P D’Mello road on East and the railway tracks on the North. The approximate area of this sub-precinct is 17.5 hectares. This zone includes many significant heritage structures such as the General Post Office (Serial Number 258) which is a Grade I building, Fort St. George Hospital (Serial Number 210) which is Grade III and Fragment of Old Fort Wall, (Serial Number 240) which is also Grade I. This area has been identified as precinct with the prima facie objective being to protect the CST from haphazard insensitive developments from the East side, specifically within Fort George Hospital complex which has abundant open space for development.

The guidelines are as follows:

- The Development Plan of 1981-2001 has earmarked the CST area as C1 as commercial area this needs to be changed to an operational functional zone and not a commercial. No commercial activities are permissible
- This should be ideally a no development protective zone. However, if there is any proposal for public use then it is proposed to be restricted as low rise development only (not higher than the concourse ridge top or till the ridge level of the adjoining residential quarters of the hospital whichever is lower). Strict monitoring is essential for all proposed construction
- Grading of Fort St. George Hospital is to be changed from grade III to Grade IIB and the whole complex is to be included in the grading as its present delineation is unclear whether the hospital or the complex building is listed.
- All encroachments abutting the heritage structures on P D’Mello Road and on rear side of General Post Office are to be removed if illegal or rehabilitated in another location if they are legal and footpaths are to be restored back to its original condition. Grade I heritage site are to be free of any encroachments.
- Removal of all hoarding in these precincts. No new hoarding permissible.

- Colour scheme of non-listed buildings are strictly controlled, neutral colours like white or matching stone colour of adjoining heritage structures are permissible subject to permission from Local Stakeholder Committee and MHCC.
- Any new development shall be predominately tiled roof top 75% of the floor area with a minimum gradient 25 degrees and partially flat terrace 25%. The new development is to be sensitive to existing heritages structures in mass, scale, architectural fenestration, and typology.
- New finishes if proposed are to be visually matching in appearance, colour and texture.
- Greens open space is to be retained, no cuttings of old trees allowed.
- Unified street furniture and signage required for this zone. This is to be designed by professional designers and is to be approved by MHCC
- Listed buildings require skilful repairs with respect to authenticity.
- Any development or construction in this area requires Local Stakeholder Committee’s approval and then approval from MHCC.

*Buffer zone 2 (Railway land):* This belongs to the railways, the proposed guidelines are similar as those of sub-precinct 11 (described above).The idea is to avoid commercial, high rise development that shall congest the area, or obstruct or distract the view of CST from a distance or any location as a result be potential threat to the CST. The present barren open space on the East can be suitably landscaped for public purpose rather than leaving it barren and unattended.

**OPPORTUNITIES**

A blessing in disguise was the decentralisation of the Central Railway Headquarters from Mumbai with

the setting up of another centre in Jabalpur, leading to a significant reduction of the load on this building. The Central Railways have been fairly effective in removing the unwanted encroachments in its veranda and the additional blocks including the covered car park canopies in its front façade.

This helped in regaining the lost visual linkages of the building. The Railways have opened a Rail Museum open to public and guided heritage walks have also been organised. These are small but positive step in bringing awareness and taking pride in maintaining the OUV of the site.

**CONCLUSION**

During the nomination process, there is a commitment to the long term management of the heritage site which needs to be maintained even after the site’s inscription. It is hoped that the commitments given in the World Heritage site nominations are adhered by all parties, more so by the Railways since this will go a long way to preserve this extremely important icon of the city and can add and improve the quality and infrastructure of the city.

It is also hoped that the serial nomination proposed in CST dossier is reviewed for any future nominations on extensions of this area. The growing needs of the city such as improved transportation in different forms like additional metro line need to be integrated in a manner that would not diminish the OUV and security threats should be analysed carefully well in advance. World Heritage site nominations are an excellent opportunity and can be tapped to spread awareness and protect our universal heritage in absence of strong protection mechanism.

**Bibliographic references**

ASI 2004, *Nomination dossier for Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus*, UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Paris.

**Notes**

<sup>1</sup> As mentioned in his email to the author

by Dr Colin Cunningham – Architectural Historian, UK.

<sup>2</sup> Heritage regulations for Greater Bombay 1995. Govt of Maharashtra UD Department and GR/notification 1999 (applicable to Section 33 (6), (7), (9)) and then in 2009 as per another circular titled revised policy in

respect of redevelopment of plots situated in Heritage Precincts or proposed precincts (Section 33 (6),(7),(8),(9),(10)).