

**TOPIC**

The Ceuta Master Zoning Plan envisages a Special Plan for this area. Changes are recommended for its boundaries, in order to coincide with those of the site and as a way to facilitate the planning and remodelling of this small township.

The aim is to resolve a housing programme that will permit the development of public land, infrastructure and urban services in the Benzú settlement, in harmonious coexistence with the surrounding landscape.

CONURBATION

The city of Ceuta is on the southern side and the eastern extreme of the Gibraltar Strait. Historically, it hosted a Punic anchorage point, a Roman factory, a Byzantine episcopate and an Arabian mint. In 1415, Portugal began its maritime adventure by taking Ceuta, which was annexed to Spain following the merger of the two kingdoms in 1581. Marked by its garrison and penal status, in the 20th century, it recovered its trading importance due to its beneficial fiscal conditions and EU support to stimulate the local economy. The Portuguese city initially covered the isthmus zone, a walled precinct bounded by the sea to the north and south and two moats to the east and west, one of which, Real, was navigable and the other, Almina, dry, while the rest of the pre-existing city was abandoned. The city grew primarily spread towards the west (Campo Exterior) and the east to a lesser extent (Monte eastwards (La Almina) until almost the start of the 20th century. Since then, the city has Hacho).

SITE

The site lies on the north-western boundary of the Ceuta municipality, about 4 km from the city centre, on a strip of land between the sea and a quarry. The area is crossed by the Ceuta-Benzú road, with the main township beside Punta Portales, a few scattered buildings on Benzú Point and another township known as El Barracón, or La Cabililla, in the Arroyo de Benzú, or Algarrobo valley.

Benzú used to be a crossing point between the nearest Moroccan town and Ceuta, however it is now closed to all except the inhabitants of Beliunes, whose quarry was opened during the first decade of the last century for construction works on the harbour. The material was transported by train along a line that coincided with the present highway, and initially a few labourers lived beside the quarry. The operations area was a former military outpost, now used as a vehicle depot, although the recent establishment of the Vehicle Decontamination Centre has freed up the land.

The entire site is part of an EU nature protection zone (SCI- Site of Community Interest) and SBPA (Special Bird Protection Area). It is also partially affected by the coastal right of way and is near a growth area of *Rupicapros Africana*, one of the species listed in the National Catalogue of Endangered Plants.

Finally, beside Cabililla there are two archaeological sites, Benzú Cave and Shelter [El Abrigo], where excavation has been underway since 2001 and is expected to continue for the next few years. This scientific project requires the appropriate protection and conservation measures.

Population: 75.414

Study area: 148.3 ha.

Project area: 10.33 ha.

**PROGRAMME**

The initiatives envisaged in the Master Plan for the Special Benzú Plan are included, although some already implemented are deleted and others are proposed.

Pedestrian seaside promenade and meeting area. Inland pedestrian path. Treatment of the road as an urban street. Promotion, demolition and rehabilitation of dwellings. Green zone that integrates the sports and games precinct. Basic shopping unit. Coastline regeneration

Waste water treatment. Research and interpretation centre for the Benzú Cave and Shelter

ISSUES

This project is expected to result in the rezoning and remodelling of the settlement, and should also free up land, remove sub-standard dwellings, put a stop to uncontrolled construction, develop public spaces and provide them with urban services and facilities, using the housing initiative (and hence the architecture) as the driving force.

Obviously, an urban answer is wanted for the necessary compatibility of the area's development and the range of effects and protection areas.





