

Seven Squares • *A new neighbourhood on a former military base in GOCH D*



EXISTING ICONIC BUILDINGS AND ELEMENTS



On the outskirts of the district of Goch, there is a former military base, build up by the British army after WO II. A few years ago this property was taken into ownership by the district council, who are now planning to develop a residential area there.

The site is dissimilar to the typical spatial organisation of military bases. Rather than exhibiting a strict, uniform barracks architecture,

the site is organised like a village that has grown organically. It is linked to lots of green outdoor spaces and a series of buildings that house specific leisure facilities, such as a casino, cinema and squash court, as well as a church and training centre. A small biotope of unusual flora and fauna, in the middle of the site, was created and looked after by the soldiers themselves. The soldiers who were based here had the job of watching the air

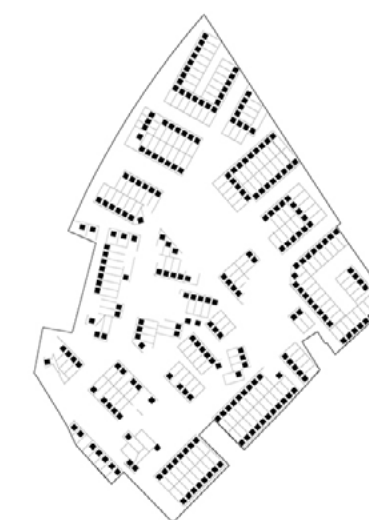
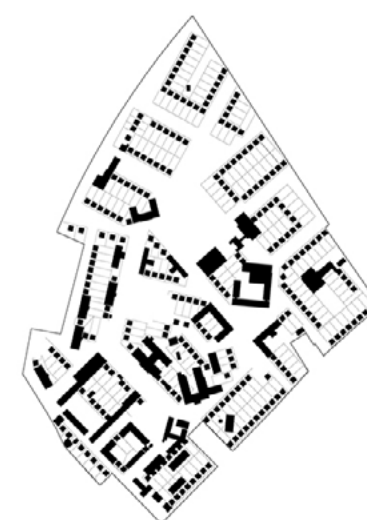
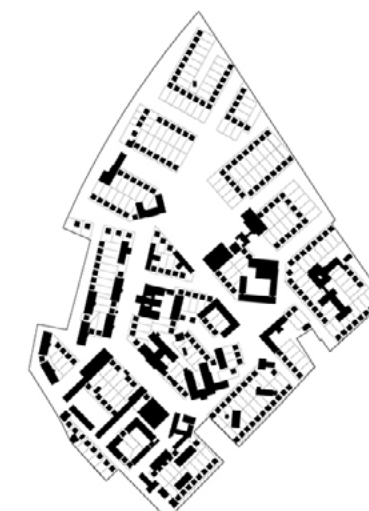
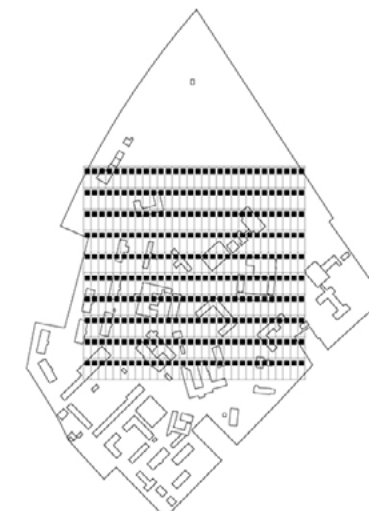
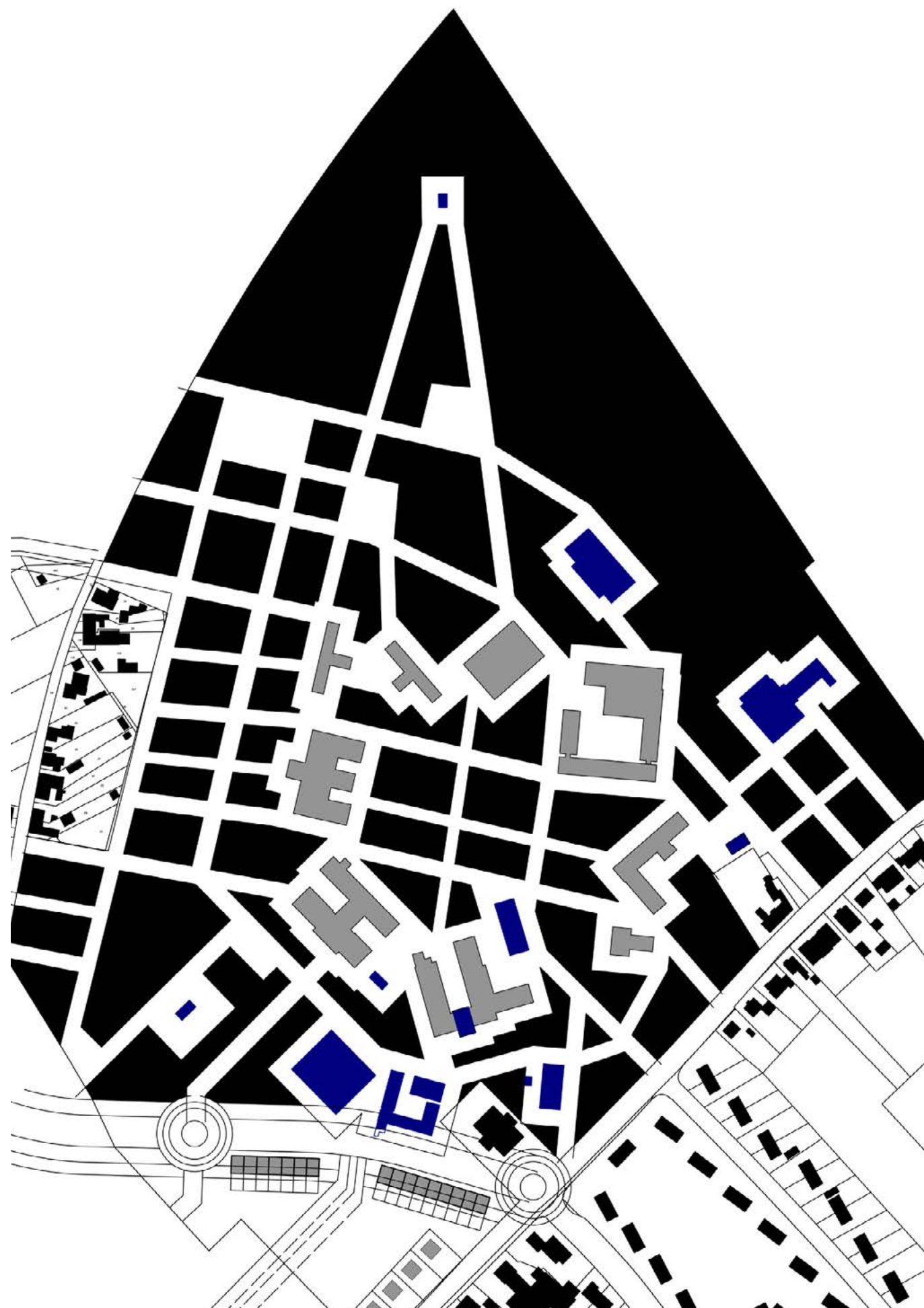
space, and this is still reflected by a cubic building in the centre of the meadow, which housed the observatory.

At the time we were approached as architects and members of the German Werkbund Nordrhein Westfalen, the idea was to realise a special and model district. The programme of requirements for the area was to be drawn up on the basis of citizen participation. The goal was to facilitate a district

for living and working, and a society of young and old, composed of all social and cultural groups of the population. Workshops with younger and older residents of Goch produced more than 900 cards with wishes and proposals. These ideas were sorted according to themes, thus mapping out a varied programme for residential space, outdoor space and social facilities, which became the basis for our proposal.



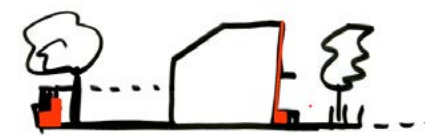
RATHER THAN EXHIBITING A STRICT, UNIFORM BARRACKS ARCHITECTURE, THE SITE IS ORGANISED LIKE A VILLAGE THAT HAS GROWN ORGANICALLY



Our proposal assumes a successional transformation process of the site. Existing buildings and spaces of good quality and with strong individuality, which have the potential to accommodate new living, working and meeting functions, were integrated as far as possible into the new urban organisation model. The main means of organising the space are zoning transitions from public to private space, from town to landscape and from roads to pedestrian space, linking up with the lines of the existing town and matching water management to the topography of the place, which will lend an added quality to the shared space. Along with the contours of the existing high-quality buildings, a series of seven linked squares will be created almost automatically. New workplaces can

be created in some of the buildings, including a bakery and a 'konditorei', and a kindergarten and/or communal living spaces. Other buildings will not be given new functions, or are in too poor a state to be able to accommodate new functions. These buildings will be demolished down to the height of low walls, which will function as seating on the square, thus recalling the past and lending quality to a unique new outdoor space.

The framework of this plan is to define and name a coherent outdoor space as a 'house' with rooms and corridors. This 'choreography' provides many possibilities, including both the classic German family house with a garden and communal living quarters, business establishments for handicraft or trade, or facilities for leisure and education.



The meeting of outdoor space and existing buildings will create a multitude of very differently tailored pieces of ground, allowing the creation of buildings with unusual and unique floor plans. The plan has room for the most diverse residential wishes, meaning that it would indeed be possible to accommodate all groups of the population here.

Another advantage of this draft plan is that it takes account of a development that (especially in these times of economic uncertainty) could take dozens of years to complete and yet right from the start would create a liveable environment, due its atmospheric, characteristic and active qualities, and would tell a rich 'story' through linking past and future in a physical way.



Unfortunately, at the end of 2012 the district council decided to demolish all the existing buildings on this site, wishing to develop a plan for it that looks as if nothing had ever taken place here, and which descends on the outskirts of the town like a satellite.

The demolition work commenced in a great hurry at the beginning of 2013 and has already been completed.

Credits

Client	Deutscher Werkbund
Size	27 ha
Project architect	Heike Löhmann
Collaborators	Marcus Kempers · Trine Kobbeldt · Egle Suminskaite

