

Unlocking character

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Bringing out a landscape's history is a delicate matter. Small but important details can show its significance and let visitors experience their surroundings in a new way. Parklaan landscape architects are experts at unlocking a site's true character by employing innovative techniques and using inventive and sustainable materials.

"Our philosophy is to put the experience first. People have to feel comfortable and enjoy the environment," says Marcel Eekhout, co-founder of Parklaan. "We also want to connect present, past and future by highlighting a site's historical significance but also use modern and sustainable materials."

One example of this is the new entrance to fort Vechten. In May it will open as a museum about the military defensive system 'Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie' and many of

the elements of the entrance design refer to the site's past. "The parking spaces are marked by tetrahedrons similar to tank barricades, the bicycle park is made from reused military fencing posts and the pathway to the fort snakes between bunkers and casemates. It's like you arrive at the museum before you enter," Eekhout says.

The entire site was developed with the 'cradle to cradle' concept, allowing it to be turned back to its original state without damaging the environment. Also many of the materials used were recycled or created from waste products. Eekhout: "The pebbles in the car park were formally used for train tracks. The pathways are made from a mix of old concrete and recycled materials such as metal giving it a distinctive red hue."

Bringing out the history in a sustainable way was also key during the redesign of the estate Het Laar. The property had to in-

corporate a new dyke to confine a large water storage area in case of heavy rains or floods, making the area climate proof. "We designed the dyke with natural-looking curves to suit the landscape. We also re-developed the existing water structures: the mirror ponds and the grand canal. They had gone dry, but now are restored to their former glory," Eekhout explains.

Taking sustainability to a new level was the Dome X project, an office garden on a business estate. Designed according to the BREEAM sustainability certificate, the garden is a true oasis of flora and fauna in the industrial area. "We've created a natural habitat to stimulate the local ecology including bird houses and bat boxes. This makes the garden a wonderful, lively area to stimulate and inspire staff on their breaks."

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LEFT: Apart from improved waterways, the Het Laar estate now also has new viewpoints, so it can be enjoyed even more by hikers. **MIDDLE:** Without cars, the fort Vechten entrance becomes one with the environment, lights are hidden underneath stork nests and the carpark appears to be an empty field. **RIGHT:** For Dome X, an unsightly wall was given a makeover: it was painted orange and now has 60 blue bird houses attached to it, boosting the local ecology.