

47 DESIGNING A VILLAGE

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47.1 INTRODUCTION

This is a report of a design process of Jan Heeling for the extension of the Frisian village Wolvega. Each illustration indicates a step in the design process.

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The first two illustrations are maps of the area. From the third up to and including the fifteenth drawing we are reporting a brain-storm session with some five colleagues in one day. They were made with greasy chalk on sketching paper on a roll. Each time they were super-imposed on the maps of figure 443 and 444. Each part of the area was studied separately; eventually the parts were joined together. Next, the whole could be further processed.

47.2 DESIGN PROCESS



443 Map analysis

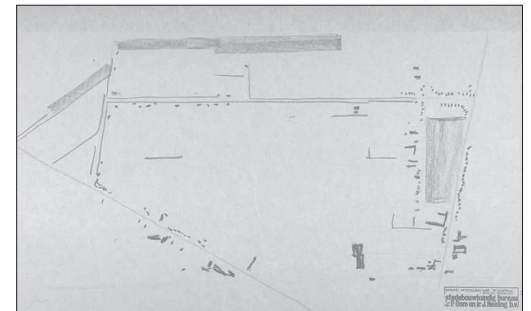
I commenced with an analysis of the map, not with a visit to the location. The map can yield a wealth of information.

Wolvega is built on a ridge of sand; it is bordered by a railway and a road to the city of Leeuwarden. The village may be partitioned roughly into squares. A square consisted in pasture on which something could be built. This is the part at the other side of the railway. Some 900 homes were being planned.



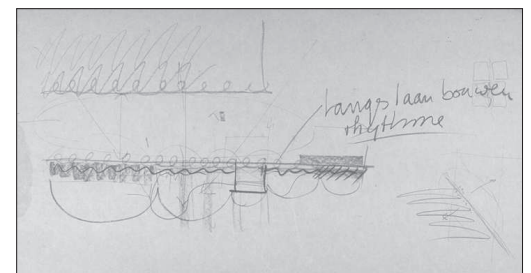
444 Built and unbuilt

Study of the built typologies. In black and white it is indicated what is built and what is not. On this map it may be seen from which period in history a building is resulting.



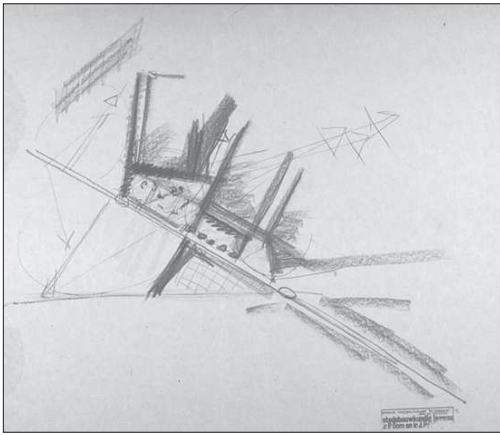
445 Essence

Exploration sketch of the edges and the main lines. In this sketch I attempted to clarify the essence of the area. The inner area is empty. Starting from the area there is no reason to start with a particular form. I have to invent ordering concepts myself to give form to the design. Designing has always ordering and forming at its core.



446 Eastern border

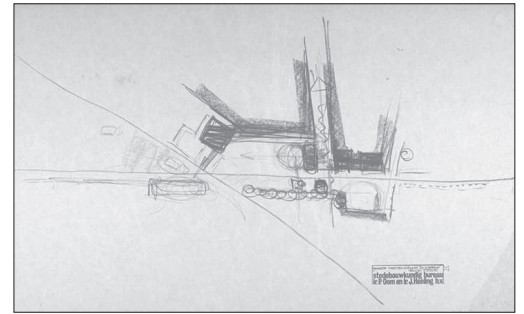
The eastern border has been drawn here. I did not want to consider this a closed afterside of the neighbourhood, but a transparent layer that may be crossed, a rhythm of open and closed.



447 Northern border

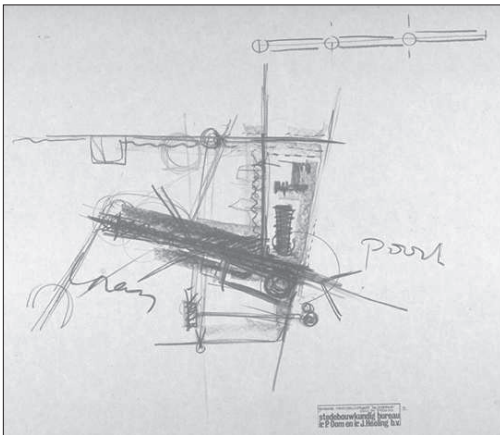
The northern border is the road to Leeuwarden. In it, I wanted to introduce an articulation with vistas through the built environment, departing from existing opportunities (farmhouses, etc.). In my opinion it is important that it is possible to estimate depth, while making one's entrance into a neighbourhood. In order to connect pasture and meadows to the old centre I want to work with increasing density coming closer to it. It is, really, a new entrance to Wolvega.

The western border is the railway. The noise requirements saw to it that a large area should remain empty; tennis fields provided a solution.



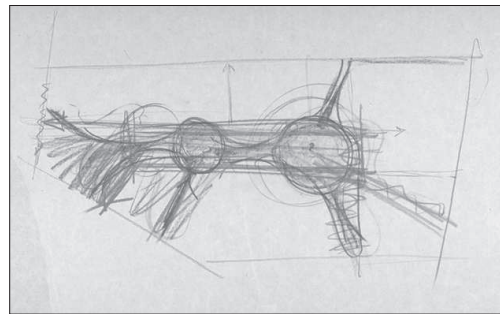
448 Western border

On the southern border there was an area with a factory. In addition, on this side is the main entrance to the surroundings as seen from the village and vice-versa. I wanted to emphasise this by a gate and a lane, leading deep into the new segment of the village.



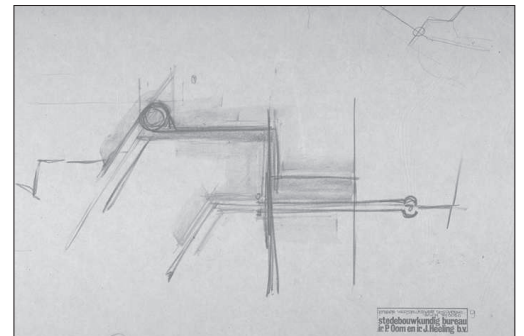
449 Southern border

At this side I planned the entrance to the area. There could come a gate and a long road leading deep into it.



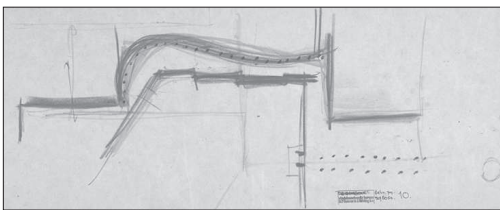
450 Inner area

The edges have now been determined. Next in turn is the inner area. Given the shortage of factors leading to forms, I started to work from the outside to the inside. There is space for two public squares in the area that might give structure to the connections in the inner area. Up to now, these are all imaginings. I do not deal with political or social considerations in my design; my designs are lacking an ideological bias.



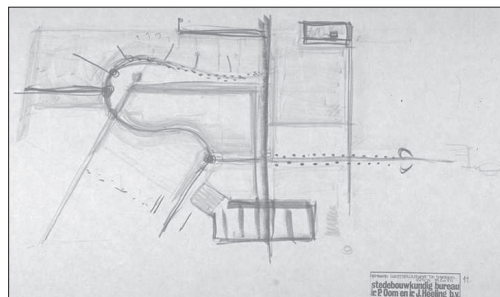
451 Combining

In this drawing, separate ideas are connected to one another for the first time.



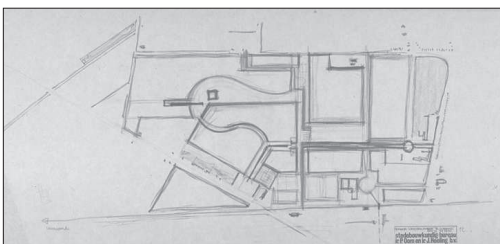
452 Curved form

In the inner area a curved form has been employed.



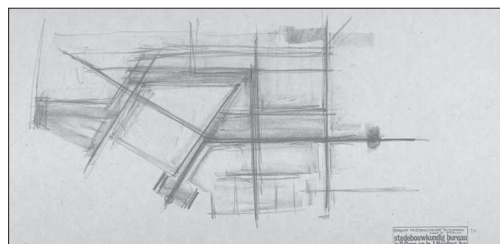
453 Bits and pieces

This drawing represents a study of the inter-dependence between the various design ideas. We came to the conclusion that it was largely an affair of bits and pieces. There was no unity, no sense of conviction. The feeling of the compositions was just not good; so we had to start one more time.



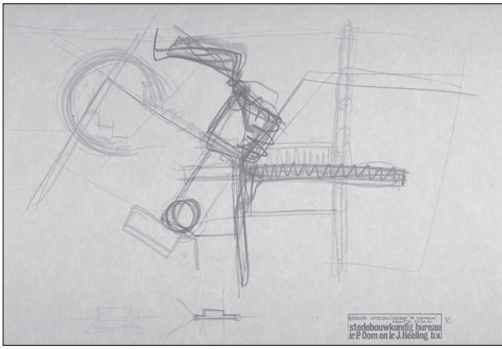
454 Development

The development of the bad idea. This drawing demonstrates the cleavage in the area.



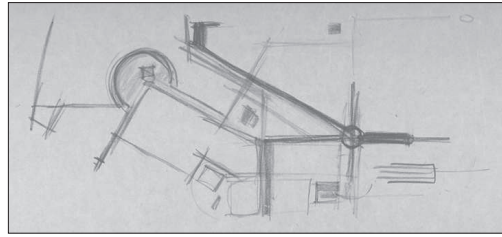
455 Wedge

We tried various strategies out in order to solve the problem of the angular twist present in the orthogonal system of the area causing the lack of coherence: a search for formal coherence. In this drawing the form of a wedge was used for solving the problem of the angular twist. Now the composition felt alright, but a triangle in the centre is just falling unluckily.



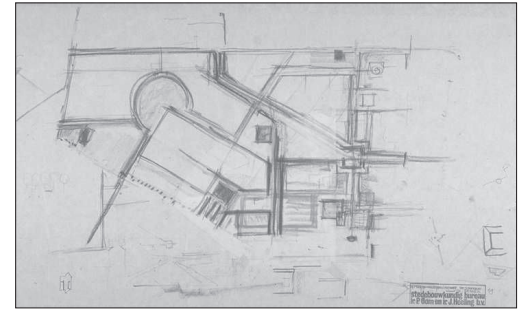
456 Circle

The situation became desperate. A circle drawn at random proved to be the final solution. Clearly, this is not a concept on an ideological basis, only employed because of formal aspects. A different form could have emerged just as well.



457 Beak

Now a form has emerged resembling a beak opening itself.



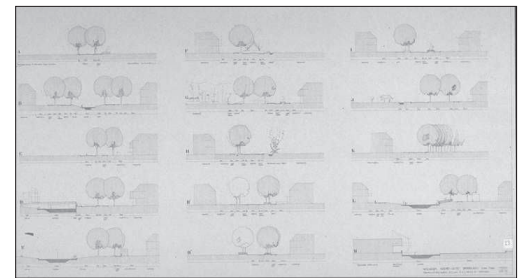
458 Development

The solution developed.



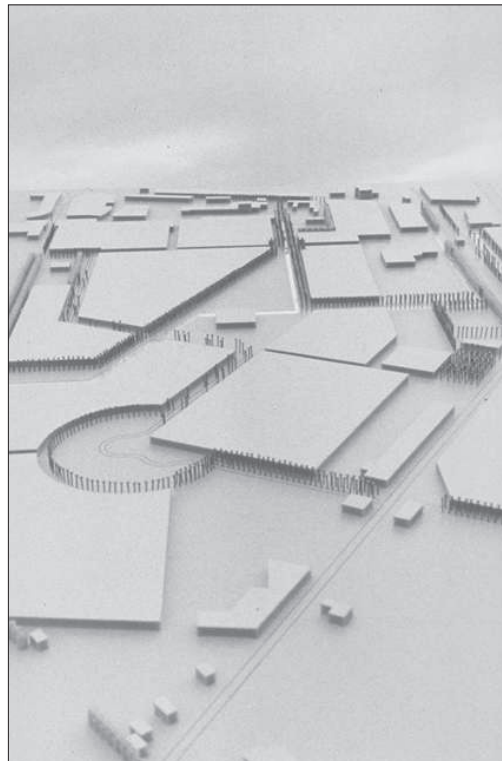
459 Check your watches

The next day we 'checked our watches' for the idea. This was also suggested by the guidelines of the municipality. This is the blueprint.



460 Context

Within the context. For each space we studied the cross-section.



461 Model

A model to give an impression of the spaciousness; this model was presented as well.



462 Adjustment

Adjustment to the existing situation, in order to study the effect.

47.3 LOOKING BACK

How did you get the commission?

A partner in my Office, Mr. Oom, advised the municipality of Wolvega.

What did you do first?

I started with an analysis of the map. I made the conscious decision not to visit the location. I have noticed that those who do are just using some 10% of the material assembled. Except for thinking this to be rather inefficient, I do believe that you look during such a first visit with tourist eyes and that you do not see what is relevant.

What was a decisive constraint?

Requirements were few; the location and the number of homes, 900, were the only ones. The rest you had to find out by yourself.

Did a requirement exist that had nothing to do with the concept?

The concept was not so rigid that new elements encountered generated disturbance.

What was the golden moment?

Finding the circle.

What was a dead end?

The stage before the circle, when unity was lacking in the plan.

What was the rôle the budget played?

A small rôle. On the basis of the bye-laws we made an estimate; it influenced the design but a little. When I was making this design the relation between the designer and the commissioner was different than it is now. One gets acquainted.

For how long continued the stage of indeterminacy?

For a very long time; that has been the nature of the profession. In my designs my determining extends to the lines of private and public properties, central lines of the infrastructure and remaining structuring of public space. The remainder is staying open.

Are you working methodologically?

Yes.

What materials are you using while designing?

In the beginning with chalk and sketching paper, later the computer.