

The image features a stylized meadow of tall grasses in shades of green and yellow, set against a blue sky. The grasses are represented by vertical lines of varying heights and colors, creating a textured, layered effect. In the foreground, a small silhouette of a person is walking on a green horizon line.

**living amidst meadows - master plan nieuweense landen**

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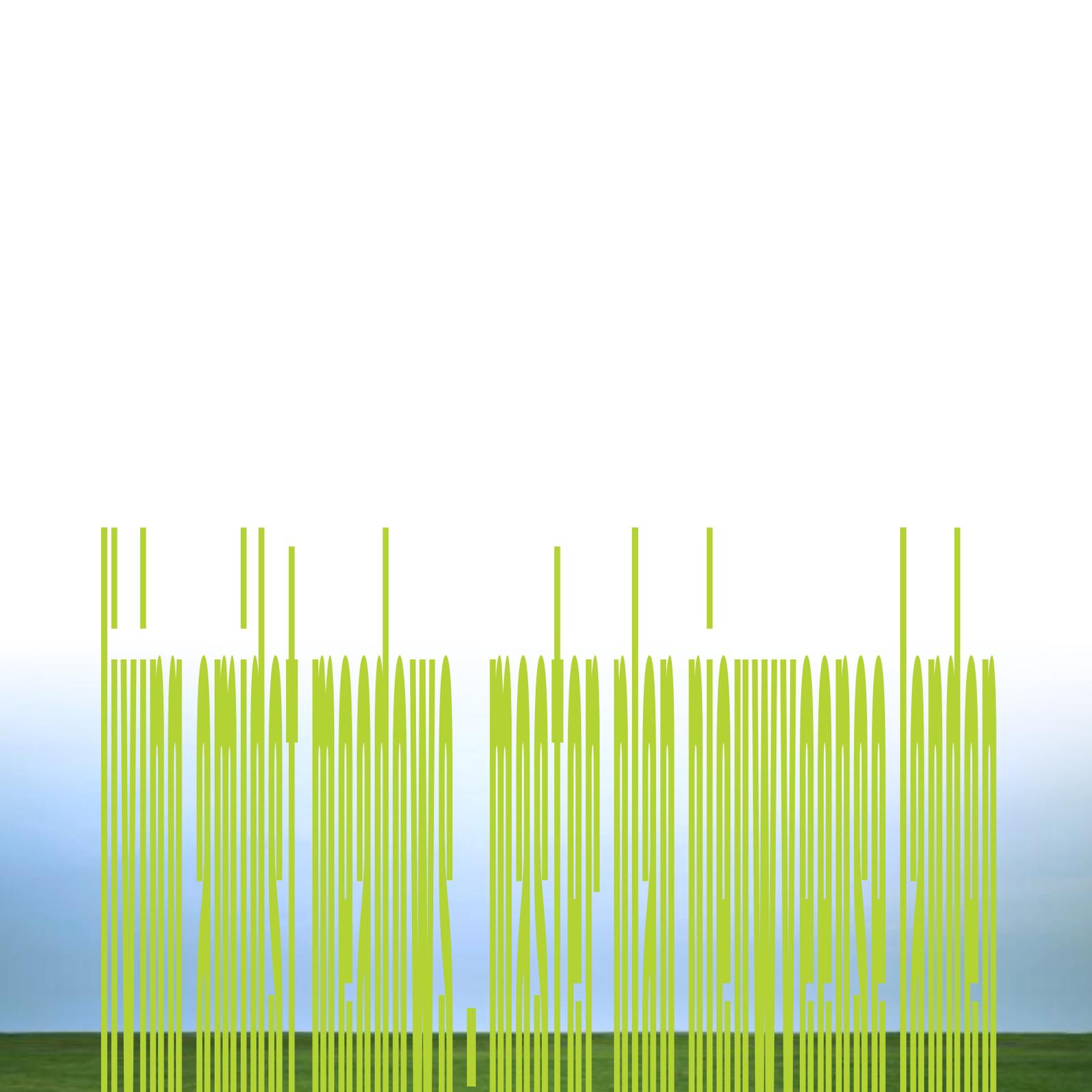
master plan Nieuweense Landen - june 2005  
OKRA landschapsarchitecten bv, Utrecht.

# inhoud

## 1. SUMMARY

## 2. GUIDELINES

foundation of the plan  
guidelines  
flexibility is necessary



# 1. SUMMARY



### Summary of the master plan

For Meppel, the development of the Nieuweense Landen, a new residential area with 5300 units, means an increasing of its size by a third: an enormous task. What's more, the municipality does not simply want to have a new residential area - the area must also be integrated as a typical part of Meppel and function as a link between the city and the countryside. And all this together will be built in a time frame of 25 years.

The process through which Nieuweense Landen is to become a typical part of Meppel is threefold: The urban development concept is based on the location's specific situation with regard to soil and water, and the peat meadow landscape to which these have given rise, with its open grassland, upward stretching parcels and ribbon development. The development programme is placed and combined in such a manner as to enable the area to have meaning for Meppel as a whole. And the new district will be an extension of the city's cultural identity.

The landscape's soil and water provided the basis for its development through the centuries. The landscape's numerous ditches are a clear sign of damp, peaty subsoil; the residential project will not be built using hydraulic filling, but actually built on this subsoil. All of the ditches present in the landscape are to be preserved. They form the basis of the landscape's water system, which will be converted from an agricultural to a more natural regime.

The ditches shall also serve as the basis for the project's urban development pattern. Providing both perspective and rhythm, they are an essential feature of both the old landscape and the new residential area to come. A portion of the parcels between the ditches is to be developed.

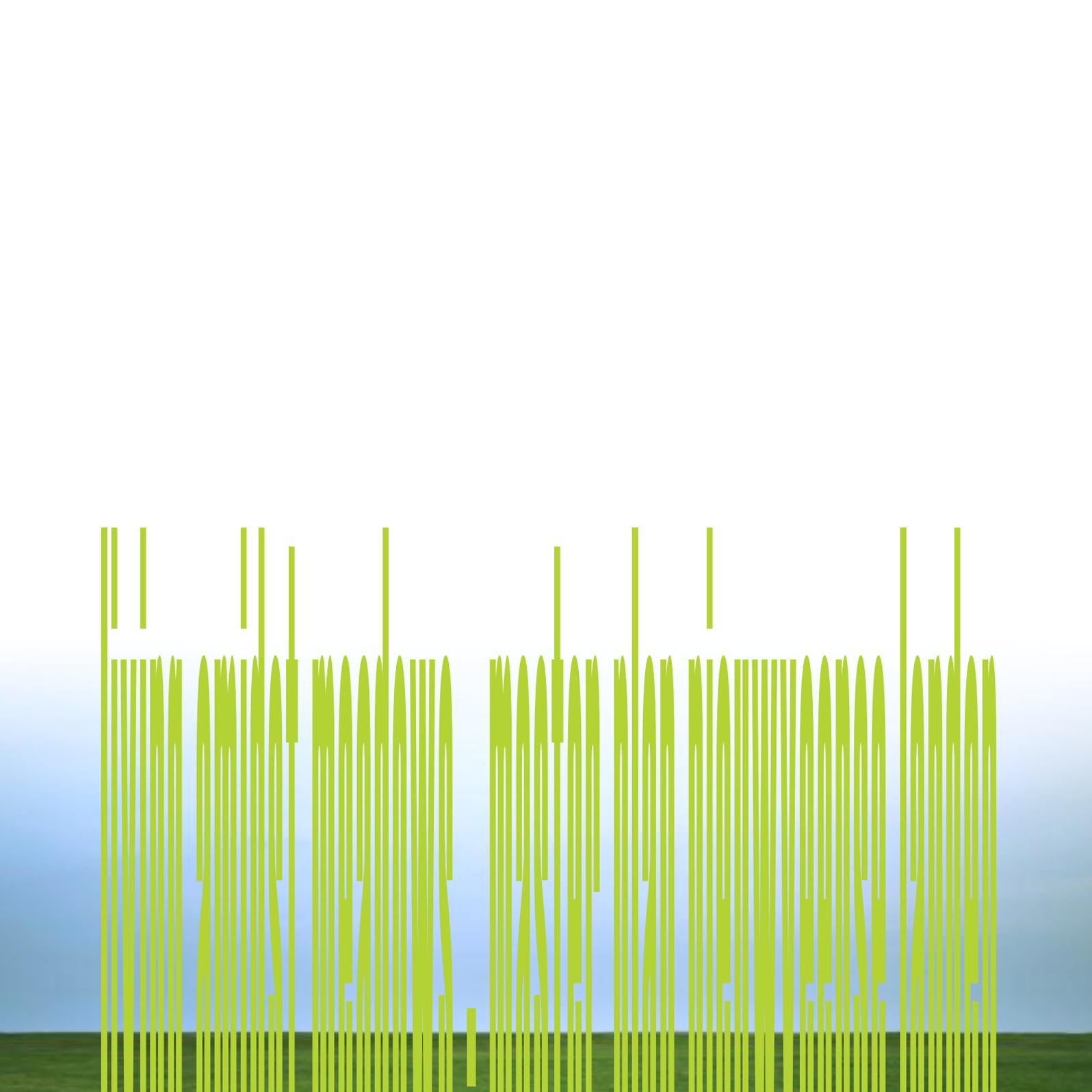
The differences in parcel width result in a continuous variety of subdivisions and a different kind of development for each strip. The strips alternate with open grassland zones, which extend deep into the residential area, so that each home is the same small distance from a stretch of grassland. And these grassland zones, which form a transition to the magnificence of the peat moor landscape outside the residential area, will continue to be used for agriculture.

Three ribbons intersect the arrangement of development strips and grassland zones. Each ribbon has its own character: a street ribbon, a water ribbon and a work ribbon. The ribbons are developed from three existing lines in the landscape. With this harmony of the strips, ribbons and grassland zones, the residential area will be carrying forward on the specific landscape of this location.

For the Nieuweense Landen to become really a part of Meppel, residents from other areas will need to have a reason to go to the new residential district. This is why sports fields, a park and cultural facilities are to be combined here into a municipal park. And, through the addition of a water sports recreation facility, the sand-extraction lake will be expanded into an item of importance for the entire city. Together they will ensure that the new residential area will form an integral part of Meppel's network of urban facilities. At the same time, the Nieuweense Landen will be given a finely meshed network of paths for cycling and walking, with numerous connections to the city and the surroundings areas. This will improve the outflow opportunities from present-day Meppel to such recreationally important areas as De Wieden and the Holterberg. And through the resulting intertwining of residential area and landscape, one will be able to begin a recreational walk long before reaching the city limits. A vital and active city, Meppel has always combined industry with commerce, and Nieuweense Landen is in keeping with this tradition. Culture-historical elements of the peat extraction process that can be found here, e.g., canals, quays and locks, will be given a new lease of life as part of the master plan. Vitality will be attained by means of a strong centre and integration of commercial and agricultural activities, catering trades, schools and care facilities into the ribbons.

Of special importance in connection with Nieuweense Landen is the aspect of gradual growth over a period of 25 years. The urban development system of ribbons and development strips and pre-plantation along the ditches, lends itself excellently to a gradual populating of the landscape, with perpetually green borders and unobstructed views of the grasslands.





# 2. GUIDELINES



### FOUNDATION OF THE MATER PLAN

The landscapes around Meppel are of great national, partly even European importance. The city of Meppel is going to grow in one of these landscapes. The council of Meppel acknowledges the importance of this landscape. She has required a master plan for a new housing area that shows great respect for this landscape. It became a plan that is not consuming landscape, overruling it by a new city pattern and shutting the landscape out, but a plan that integrates the two, makes a symbiosis between city and landscape.

#### ***Motto: living amidst meadows***

The new housing area is going to be a landscape-city. City and landscape are interweaved in the new city district. The meadows and building sites are combined like the fingers of two hands shoved into each other.



**Typical Meppel-like**

The new housing area also has to become typical for Meppel. Six ingredients are used in the design to achieve that. The ingredients spring from the here existing landscape and the city of Meppel, including their cultural history.

**Ingredients from the landscape:**

- the stretched out parceling of the meadows and ditches is the base for the new urban pattern;
- an occupation pattern of ribbon-development, characteristic for this landscape, refines the new urban pattern;
- integrating historical elements of the peat production: 'griften' (small canals used for peat boats), quays, locks and sailable water.



**Ingredients from the city:**

- two urban facilities of importance for the whole city are added to the district (city park and recreation lake);
- recreational linking of city and landscape through a finely meshed network of paths;
- Meppel is a working city. The new city district has to be more than just housing and therefore contains all kinds of possibilities for working (at home, services, businesses, city-related farms, et cetera).



The pattern of city and landscape interlinking and these six ingredients together form the basic philosophy of the plan. They are the ultimate touchstone for all further working out of the plan.

### GUIDELINES

In the master plan for Nieuwveense Landen these main ideas are worked out in all kinds of themes and guidelines.

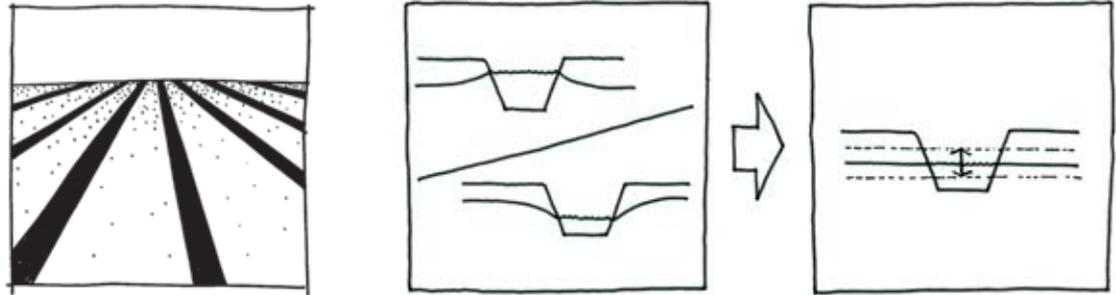
Some of them have taken a lot of research and negotiations to reach the outcome that's in the master plan. For example: the exact pattern of meadows and building sites, the position of the main road, the level sectors of ground water, the position of the shopping center. These can all be found in the map of the design and are further explained in the theme maps.

There are those that are used as a technical starting-point to be able to make the plan, but need to become clearer during the process. For example: the housing program and the exact working of the water system.

A third category is formed by those put in to guarantee the spatial quality of the plan when worked out. For example: the spatial rules for the meadow-zones, the building strips, the ribbon-parcels and for growing. These guidelines are presented in the master plan by little icon-like drawings.

In principal all these guidelines can be changed. How strict the guidelines are interpreted depends on the political decisions that are made and the phase of plan-developing that is at hand. In the following pages the main guidelines are presented, including the considerations.

## WATER SYSTEM



### Guidelines

\* All ditches are maintained.

\* Agricultural water system (high summer level, low winter level) to a more natural water system (one level with light natural fluctuations).

### Considerations

The water system has both a technical and environmental goal as a strategic goal in developing a new housing area.

Technical / environmental is to keep all rain water in the area and improve the water quality. For this the plan needs:

- a large amount of water surface, well spread through the whole district,
- lots of edges (purifying vegetation),
- limited distances between road and roof surfaces and open water,
- and visual connection between rainwater of roofs and streets and the open water.

The last is to make the inhabitants environmental aware through showing the direct relation between water-polluting activities and the surface water. These technical and environmental goals are best served by maintaining all ditches.

The strategic importance of keeping all ditches is to force developers (governmental and private) to make every building strip different from the next one. Doing so keeps the under layer of the landscape recognizable in the housing area (ditches, views over the ditches, stretched out characteristic). And it gives variety to the housing area itself, makes orientation easier and gives a base for developing a neighborhood feeling.

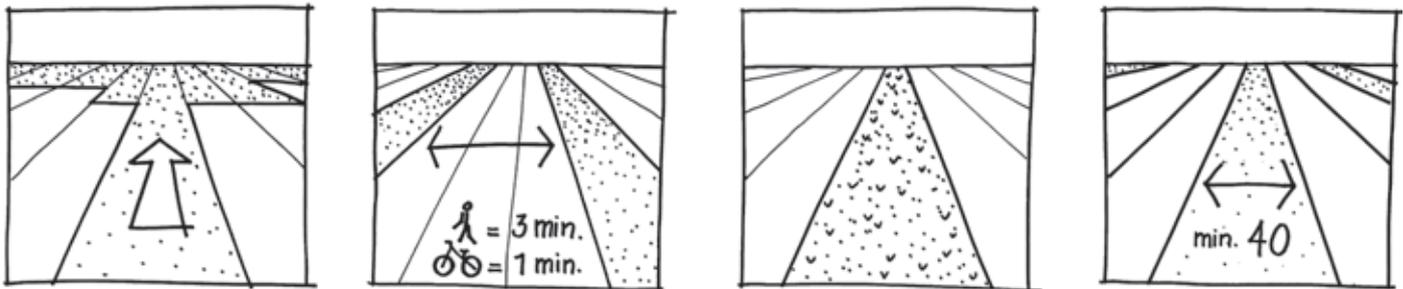
A weakness in strictly maintaining all ditches is that the ditches are too small to be used by boats, even canoes and rowing boats. Combining a few ditches to a broader channel would solve this, but might give other limitations again.

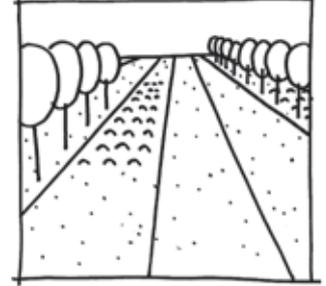
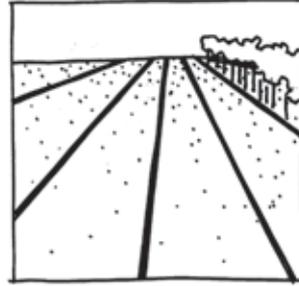
## MEADOW - ZONES

### Guidelines

- \* The meadow zones stretch out into the open landscape to the north of the development. There are no visual barriers blocking the vistas.
- \* The meadow zones have a minimum broadness of 40 meters, half a minute walking.
- \* The distance between two meadow zones is a maximum of 250 meters. Every house is close to a meadow zone. Walking a block one always comes along a meadow and has a view to the open landscape.
- \* The meadows provide the experience of space in the city district. Therefore the vegetation is low, mainly grass.

- \* There is a gradient in soil and vegetation of the meadows from west to east:
  - more wet and peat-like in the west, with possibilities for developing swamp-like meadow vegetation with edges of shrubbery in connection with the Wieden;
  - the middle and north part are open meadows with edges of alder, connecting to the open peat meadow landscape;
  - the dryer and bit more sandy east gives possibilities for grassland, open air horticulture and vegetable gardens with larger trees like oak on the sides.





### Considerations

The multiple meadow zones give the district a unique identity, different from all other areas in Meppel or even in the rest of the Netherlands. It integrates the spaciousness of a typical Dutch landscape in a housing development. Because of the density of the meadow zones everybody in the area lives close to a meadow zone, thus realizing the motto 'living amidst the meadows'.

The pattern and exact position of the meadow zones and building strips in the master plan is a result of:

- vistas to important points in the landscape and city;
- a financial optimum for the plan;
- visual and experience studies resulting in the guidelines for measurements.

Crossing a meadow zone you have to be able to see the open landscape outside the district to make the connection between neighborhood, meadow zone and open landscape reality. Therefore the guideline concerning low vegetation is introduced. Though when the meadow vegetation in the whole district would be the same, the area becomes to uniform. On the other hand, the soil and water circumstances are not in all meadow zones the same. The district is given variety and different atmospheres through changing the vegetation and use of the meadow zones from east to west.

The guidelines about size and position of the meadow zones are already integrated in the layout of the urban pattern. The guidelines about the use and vegetation (keeping the views and giving different atmospheres to different parts of the district) are important for the further work out of the plan.

## BUILDING STRIPS

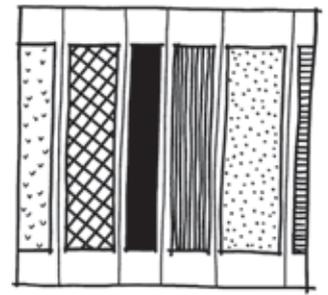
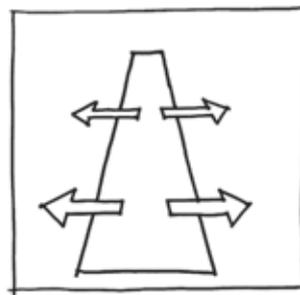
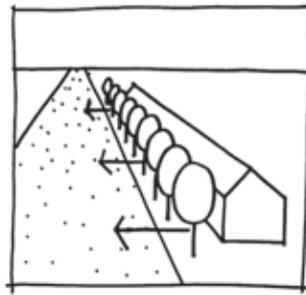
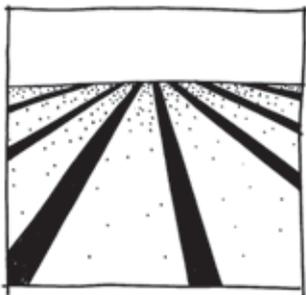
### Guidelines

- \* Maintaining all ditched. Two ditches with green slopes border every building strip. Every strip has its one unique width.
- \* Every border between a strip and meadow zone is a front side, with addresses and a public road. The borders are planted with trees, making a green background to the open meadow space and keeping the view through a green curtain from the building side.
- \* All building strips are oriented to the sides. The strips have the same profile over the whole length.
- \* Every strip is a strong visual unity. Each one is clearly different from the next one.

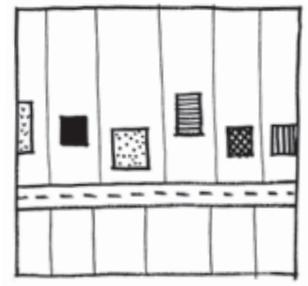
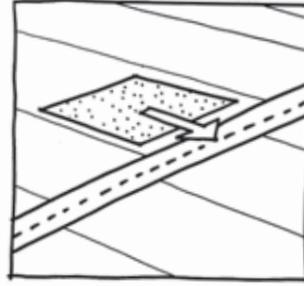
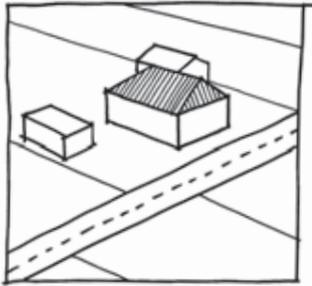
### Considerations

The guidelines make characteristics of the landscape underneath still readable in the city district and the built neighborhoods: the strong linearity north - south combined with a refined rhythm of parcels east - west.

The front sides to the meadow zones are a guideline to make sure the meadow zones can be experienced by every inhabitant, not only the ones who live on the sides of the meadows. A justly question is if it's necessary to make every meter of the meadow sides a front side. Probably not, though this is the easiest way to guarantee that every inhabitant can enjoy the presence of the meadows the most. In the case the edge is not public, the accessibility of the meadows should be guaranteed in other ways. The meadows loose value when less people can enjoy them.



## RIBBON PARCELS



### Guidelines

- \* All building lots along the ribbons have the building characteristics of a farmyard, with a main building in the front, asymmetrical on the lot, and additional buildings in the back.
- \* Between every two parcels in the ribbon there is a free view over the ditch to the land behind.
- \* Every parcel is oriented to the road, with a representative front. The sides and the back are planted.
- \* Every lot along the ribbon is different from the next one, with a changing building-line, building volume, architectural style and from different times

### Considerations

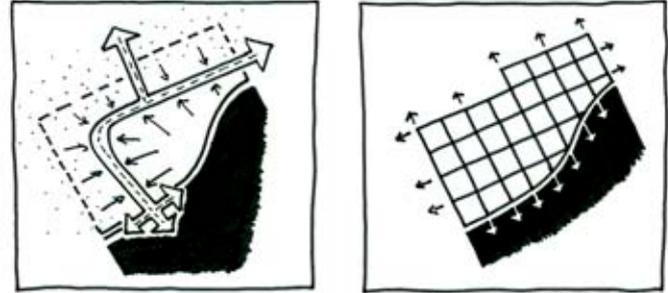
The guidelines are there to create the characteristics of a historical ribbon development. They help to make the district typical for Meppel and for this landscape.

The ribbons should be recognizable different from the building strips. Therefore the guidelines of the strips and ribbons are made different. The clearly recognizable ribbons together with a different basic design per the ribbon (street, water, on sided), give a condition for orientation in the district in the north - south direction.

## TRAFFIC SYSTEM

### Guidelines

- \* The main road is positioned within the district and not on the edge.
- \* A finely meshed network of paths, following the grid structure of meadow zones and ribbon developments, makes the district very accessible for low speed traffic (bicycle, pedestrian, et cetera). These paths connect to the city and into the landscape.



### Considerations

Two reasons to position the road in the middle of the housing area:

- to keep the contact with the surrounding landscape; the road shouldn't become a border;
- a more efficient road system. Houses are built on both sides of the main road. This gives more connections to the neighborhoods. Each connection gets less traffic, which gives better living conditions for the houses around the connection roads.

Slow traffic (pedestrians, bicycles, etc.) should be a good alternative for the car, to move around in the district and to go to the rest of Meppel. For this the network of paths has to be:

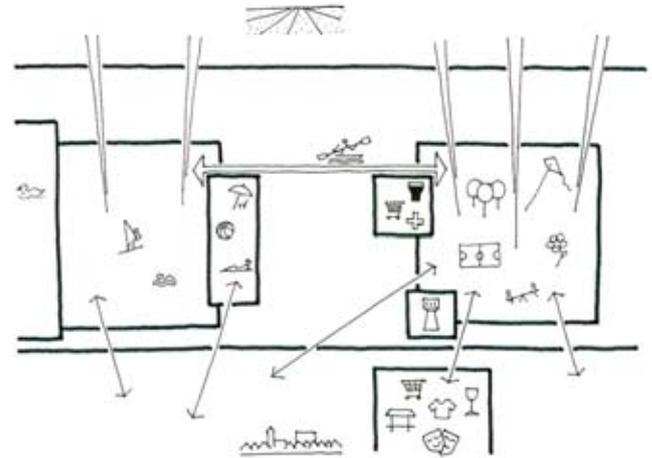
- very direct, making short connections while the car has to take a detour
- comfortable and safe to ride and walk on.

Furthermore a finely meshed network with lots of connections to outside is the best way to physically make Nieuwveense Landen a link between city and landscape.

## URBAN FACILITIES

### Guidelines

- \* The sand extraction lake will be transformed to a recreational lake with nature and housing at its borders.
- \* A new city park will be developed at the connection point of existing city and new district. It will become an active park with all kinds of facilities, like sport fields and cultural facilities.
- \* The district center is placed in the middle of the district, good accessible by car and by bicycle.
- \* The sailable water ribbon connects park, lake and center. Together they form a recreational backbone in the plan.



### Considerations

The sand extraction lake is part of the plan area. Better to make something positive out of it. Being close to the Wieden it can be buffer for recreation. Better to keep most of the recreation of the district and city within the area than to let it spread out to this natural reserve of European importance. The city has no good accessible lake for day recreation at this moment. Therefore the lake will be valuable for all residence of Meppel. The surrounding of the lake also can have some of the natural value of the Wieden, so people can see and experience it here, creating less recreational pressure on the Wieden.

The park is programmed this way and places at the connection point of city and new development to attract people of both areas to recreate and meet here. The park has two vistas to the landscape so every visitor will immediately will experience the atmosphere and identity of the district as housing amidst meadows.

The guidelines for urban facilities are mainly about their position in the district and give a rough layout of their program. Further guidelines for working out the design still have to be made.

## GROWING DEVELOPMENT

### Guidelines

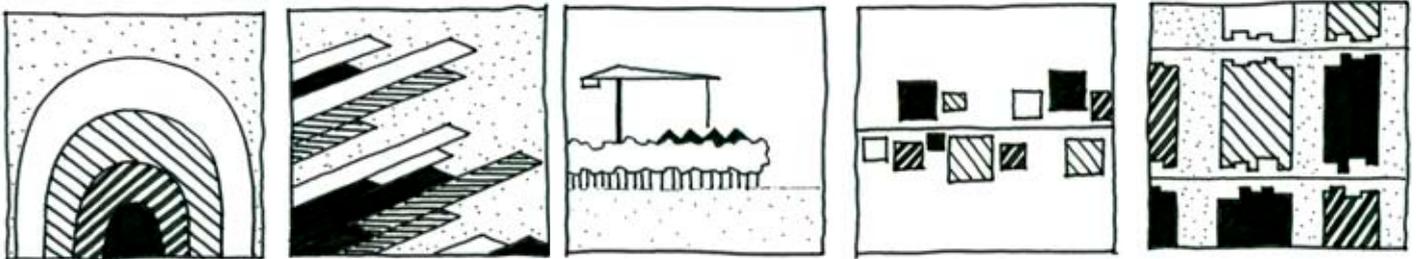
- \* Starting to build from the middle, where the connection to the rest of Meppel is.
- \* The transition of district to landscape is gradual in every phase of the development.
- \* The edges of the district are always green, through planting prior to building
- \* The ribbons grow through progressive increasing the density
- \* Strips grow more in units enclosed by the meadow zones and ribbons

### Considerations

When the housing market decreases, the city must be able to stop or slow down the development without being left with a clearly not finished area or a non-functional district because parts are missing. The housing area always has to be connected to the existing city, not being an island in the countryside. Also the border between city and landscape should look finished at every moment of construction.

Meppel is going to grow into a very open and therefore vulnerable landscape. Construction sites will be visible from long distances. Normally the neighborhood edges will only be planted after construction has finished. And then the trees still need years to grow before the bare walls of housing will be covered and the landscape has its green appearance again. To show respect to the landscape implies to prevent these open wounds. Pre-planting the outlines of the meadow zones is the best way to do this.

A district that has a sense of time built in, like historical cities, becomes livelier in its appearance. Nieuwveense Landen is going to be built in 25 years. This gives the unique opportunity to spatially mix the building periods, thus creating a sense of history that doesn't exist in an average new housing district. However mixing building periods had the disadvantage that the building process can be a burden to more residents over a longer period of time.



## FLEXIBILITY IS NECESSARY

During the process of further developing the district and working out all kinds of aspects, the guidelines as mentioned above can also start to restrain creativity. However, a certain restriction is necessary to get away from standard solutions practiced everywhere in the country and move towards more creative solutions, designed specific for this district of Meppel. On the other hand, the plan has to be able to adapt to the changing demands of society in the next 25 years. Therefore the total of guidelines can never be taken as a 100% rule. The challenge for this phase of the plan is to find out how many of the guidelines have to be kept and how many can be bent without losing the quality of the plan. Per neighborhood the specific combination of guidelines and flexibility within can be different. But the goals and considerations behind the guidelines stay valid. In that way they are more essential than the guidelines themselves. And most important of all is that the main pattern of open fields and building sides and the six ingredients of the plan are realized.

