

Uppåkra Arkeologiska Center

Abstract

DIPLOMA AUTUMN 2020

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Context

Uppåkra is the name of a rich archaeological site located about five kilometers south-west of Lund in the region of Skåne in southern Sweden. The site, distinctly sitting on top of a hill in an otherwise plain landscape, was once the center of a what is believed to be the biggest iron age settlement in Scandinavia. Archaeological excavations have taken place continuously since the 1930's, but due to lack of funding and little knowledge and interest from outside the region, this has only been done in a small scale. Only a minor part of the site, that in total measures over 40 hectares, has been excavated so far. Today, Uppåkra gives a modest impression, consisting of a small, rural village and a church surrounded by fields of cultivated land. The traces of the rich history are hidden underneath the surface and are not particularly well known. For anybody passing by there is nothing that tells them that this once was a grand society, very different from the small village of today.

The visitors center

The visitors center (also called the visiting center) is a category of buildings whose primary purpose is to mediate an attraction or a site. The center shall inform the visitors and provide a context within which the attraction can be experienced. A visitors center therefore typically belongs to a place that has a greater importance than the building itself.

Definition of task

The task set for the diploma project is to design a visitors center to Uppåkra with the purpose of mediating the history of the site. The center will also provide facilities for archaeologists to conduct research, thus further un-earthening and spreading knowledge about Uppåkra and its history. On a programmatic level, the intention is to anchor the visiting center into the local community by providing a mixed use program that may involve a broader range of local users and activities in the center.

Intentions

Relating to Uppåkra as an archaeological place, the intention is to design a building that supports and interacts with the continuing excavations of the site. It should be able to expand as the collections of objects grow, or retract or be moved if a place occupied by the building needs to be excavated. The building should be prepared to respond to any new findings that may change the perception of the site. Furthermore, there is a paradox in building upon an archaeological site that the project intends to address: the visitors center is needed to mediate the site, but building on top the rich archaeological findings could potentially destroy them. With this in mind, the diploma project aims to explore the challenges of constructing on valuable land, rather than to avoid them.

Delivery

The delivered material has four main parts:

1. Diploma program (Spring 2020. Revised autumn 2020)
2. Posters
3. Booklet about Prästlönebostället
4. Process material

Diploma program

The diploma program sets out the framework for the diploma project, and provides a more detailed account of the contexts, intentions and tasks stated earlier in this abstract. The program contains three sections: a detailed site analysis, a room program and a section of case studies. The intention of the site analysis is to establish a reading and understanding of the site. This understanding then informs the room program, which is tailored to provide a programmatical solution that suits both the visiting center and the place, opening up the visitors center to users from the local community. The case studies are seen from a building-type perspective, and investigate concrete architectural concepts used in established visitors centers.

Posters

The posters are drawings and visualisations of the proposal for a new visitors center in Uppåkra. All posters are made in measurable scales on A1 and A0 format with high resolution. Censors are encouraged to digitally zoom in on the posters order to experience the level of detail aimed for.

Prästlönebostället

Booklet with detailed information about the transformation of "Prästlönebostället", an existing farm in Uppåkra that is refurbished and incorporated in the visitors center. It contains drawings of existing conditions, new interventions, and accounts of the intentions behind the transformation.

Process

Material produced during the course of the semester such as sketches, investigations, working models and schemes.

Project description

Landscape level

Inspired by the findings in the case studies section of the diploma program, pathways are established on the site. They each have their own theme, thus mediating a specific part of the site's character and history to the visitors. Furthermore, the intention is that the pathways function as thresholds, making the visitor aware of having entered the archeological site. All pathways are connected to the visitors center, and have starting points that are distributed along the boundary of the archeological site. As the boundary of the site is theoretical, and cannot be seen, their shape and their distribution along the border of the archeological site marks Uppåkra on the map, mediating the site's presence. This is further enhanced by trees planted along the site's border at the starting points. This continues a theme found in the site analysis, that planted vegetation is used to highlight axes or sightlines. The starting points and the pathways are also designed to offer a service to the people in the local community. Children and families can use playgrounds at the starting points, while walkers, joggers and bikers can use the pathways.

Building level

The visitors center is located where the archaeological findings are the most intense on the site, south west to the church. This follows the intentions established in the program of incorporating the excavations into the visiting center. The placement and the main entrance is also programmatically strategic, as they maintain a close vicinity to the church. The church may be used as a large gathering or lecturing space for visitors to the center, and parts of the center may be used by the parish. Together, they offer spaces for mixed use by a wide variety of users. The chosen site is also open to most of the sightlines described in the program. More importantly, it gives views towards the wide, cultivated fields that can be experienced as a typical character of the place. The existing farm "Prästlönebostället" is incorporated into the visitors center. The farm is today empty, and the intention of transforming it to be a part of the visitors center is supported by the conclusions made in the diploma program. It minimizes the new building footprint and mediates the history of the site. The size and placement of buildings is adapted to the pattern of Uppåkra village. A more detailed account of interventions and the reasoning behind is included in the booklet about Prästlönebostället. The visitors center is divided into two main parts, that are connected by a wide, glazed walkway. A situation is provided where the parts operate together, but may also function independently.

Permanent part

The permanent part of the visitors center is located within the transformed barn of Prästlönebostället. It accommodates the functions that requires full climatization, such as offices and research facilities, meeting rooms, as well as the themed exhibitions and the café and restrooms for the visitors. A generous loft space above the work areas offers expansion possibilities for the separate functions, and is well suited for varied workshops or performances. The refurbishment is mainly based on reuse of existing timber constructions and materials. The steel structure of the exhibition pavillion (see below) is used as a framework for the themed exhibition, and the timber cassette elements (here filled with insulation) are used in the rised, ground floor. The refurbished structure maintains presence and visibility of the original barn construction. At the same time it allows for future flexibility of plan solutions and also removal to expose the original ground floor of the barn.

Expandable part

This is an expandable and retractable pavillion, naturally ventilated and thermally unclimatized. It accommodates the permanent exhibiton (see below). It is connected to, and can be accessed as a part of moving through the pathways described on the landscape level. The intention behind keeping it unclimatized, or rather semi-climatized is to reduce its weight and complexity, thus facilitating future expansion, retraction or relocation. The east-facing part of the elongated volume is a "wandering hall" along a continous glass wall, open to the panoramic view as an attraction and a backdrop to the experience of the exhibition. The exhibited objects are distributed along the more closed western wall which, together with skylights, create a focus on the exhibition.

Exhibition

The permanent exhibiton in the pavillion focuses on showcasing the mass of the findings in

Uppåkra. As concluded in the program, the majority of the findings from Uppåkra are unprecious objects, such as a piece of ceramic or a tooth, that if viewed as a singular object possesses little curational value. However, if these objects are viewed together as a substantial and multifaceted selection of findings, the quantity itself becomes a quality, and they can convey the potential of what still lies buried in the earth. The intention is that as the collections grow, the pavillion can expand, showcasing more objects. In this way the "permanent" exhibition will also be dynamic. Precious objects are exhibited as part of themed exhibitons in the climatized part.

Construction system

The pavillion is based on a regular structural grid of 5 x 5 meters. The intention of the grid and the modular construction is to provide a situation where the pavillion can be constructed without destroying the archaeological findings in the earth, while also responding to future findings on the site. The main, loadbearing structure is a steel system of column and beams based on standard profiles. The beams rests on triangular brackets that eases montage and increases lateral stiffness. The columns stand on shallow foundations of prefabricated and removable concrete slabs. The steel skeleton has a low weight, and is robust to repeated montage and disassembly. The floor, roof and walls are lightweight casette timber elements. They allow for varied surface treatment while maintaining their material character. Each building section of 5x5 m is structurally independent, One section can be removed, without affecting the structure of those who remain. The structural system of the pavillion is also used in secondary buildings for the Archaeological school, an external storage and to cover a reopened excavation showing the ruins of Kulthuset.

Articulations

Skylights are used to put focus on the exhibition. If a portion of the land where the pavillion stands is to be excavated, the floor of the module can be removed, incorporating the excavation as a part of the exhibiton. The entire footprint of the pavillion may also be rearranged. Viewfinders are introduced to frame important views in the landscape, that each has it's own significance and mediates a part of Uppåkras history. If a new, important point in the landscape is discovered, a viewfinder may be added to the pavillion, mediating the new understanding of the site, or a new focus point. Viewfinders in proposed project:

Uppåkra Church

Pagan temple placed on the same spot as today's church. New church symbolizes the rise of christianity, which coincides with the demise of the iron age society. The place of the church, on the highest point in the landscape, explains choice of location for iron age society: a strategic, easily defendable plateau overlooking it's surroundings

Agricultural landscape

The cultivated fields tells the story of Skåne's fertile earth, the main industry in Uppåkra both today and in the past. This view connects the historic Uppåkra with the present, as the main character of the landscape hasn't changed. Even some of the crops are the same today as it was a 1000 years ago.

Gullåkra Mosse

This view tells the story of the ritual and religious circumstances in the iron age, as Gullåkra was used as a sacred place for sacrifice.

Barn of Prästlönebostället

Tells the story of how Uppåkra history as an Iron age society fell into oblivion, only to be rediscovered when the barn of Prästlönebostället was being constructed.

Malmö

The view towards Malmö and Öresund, tells the story of the future, a view of a region that is increasing contacts with Copenhagen and continental Europe - a story similar to historic Uppåkra?