



## **Colloquium Bad Lobenstein on 5th May 2023**

**Launching day of the competition  
27th of March 2023**

### **Organiser**

**Europan – German Association for the Promotion of  
Architecture, Housing and Urban Planning  
in cooperation with the City Bad Lobenstein**

### **Contact:**

#### **Europan Deutschland**

Nele Zareh / Lola Meyer

Friedrichstraße 23A

10969 Berlin

Germany

phone +49 (0)30 399 185 49

e-mail mail@europan.de

### **Stadt Bad Lobenstein**

Stadtbauamt

Kati Halfter

Markt 1

07356 Bad Lobenstein

Telephone + 49 36651 7714 - 0 or - 3

Fax + 49 36651 7710 - 0

E-Mail bauamt@bad-lobenstein.de

www.bad-lobenstein.de

## **Colloquium at Bad Lobenstein Castle**

**Start: 01:30 p.m., End: 03:00 p.m.**

**Report written by: Dr. Felix Bentlin, European**

**Date: 05.05.2023**

**1. Question: How should the spa status be evaluated from the city's point of view with regard to various resources? For example, what role do thermal water or mud play?**

Answer: Bad Lobenstein is a state-recognised mud spa. The physician Dr. Aschenbach founded the mud spa in the 19th century. As formulated in the competition, Bad Lobenstein's long history as a health resort is to be further developed for future health tourism (see complete site brief, page 46). Especially in GDR times, residents from all over the city benefitted from providing decentralised accommodation for tourists. Large banquet halls and communal dining facilities were elements of spa tourism.

In addition to mud, thermal water is another important remedy and is used in the spa centre (Therme) for all water areas as well as treatments with water. There is no brine in Bad Lobenstein, as there are no salt deposits. There is only an artificial salt cave in the spa. Until 2018, the moor exploitation was prohibited due to its location in the drinking water protection zone. As a result, a concept for moor renaturation was developed (see complete site brief data update, file „New Documents after Launch“). The material used for moor cures is sourced delivered from Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and brought to the spa centre for the various therapies. After use, the recycled material is reintroduced into the Helmsgrüner Moor as part of a natural cycle including future re-use. Looking forward, greater importance should be attached to re-storage and re-use in accordance with the principles of the circular economy.

**2. Question: What are the cultural traditions, ways of life and techniques regarding the local slate deposits?**

Answer: Tourists and locals can experience „Thuringia's blue gold“ in the Schieferland Geopark in the neighbouring town of Lehesten, about 10km away. What were once the largest open-cast slate mines in continental Europe have been transformed into biotopes, water landscapes and quasi-natural slag heaps. Today, these post-mining geoto-

pes convey the mining, extraction and processing of slate, especially via thematic hiking trails and engaging museums. There is also a roofing and slate-making school in the town of Lehesten. The craft is widespread. Not only roofs but also façades are traditionally made of slate here, where craft firms are practitioners of a variety of techniques and traditions. There are also specialist firms in the region whose services in the field of monument protection and are in demand throughout Germany. The Ardesia Therme's name reflects this rich history.

**3. Question: Is it true that in the region around Bad Lobenstein not only roofs are traditionally covered with slate, but façades as well?**

Answer: Yes, it is a tradition here in the region to also make façades with slate roofing. However, there is no regulation requiring it. In the nature park regulations of the „Thuringian Slate Mountains - Upper Saale“, „slate-coloured“ is stipulated as a design reference. The material is not specified, only the colour is emphasised. Monument protection, slate roofing and energy production with solar collectors or photovoltaics offer design development potential for the region.

**4. Question: What is the city's vision for the Helmsgrüner Moor?**

Answer: The city is pursuing the goal that its own mud should be used again in the spa in the future. Past certification processes within the framework of the city's mud spa status have so far prevented the use of local mud. In the future, large areas of the moor are to be transferred to municipal ownership. Only a small part of the Helmsgrüner Moor is currently under municipal ownership. A citizens' participatory process beginning in 2019 led to the idea of a „Moorpatscherweg“, a pathway leading from the spa to the moor via the town. Residents want a connection to the moor. In GDR times, spa guests in Bad Lobenstein were called „Moorpatscher“, or moor splashers, by the locals because they splashed in the moor, i.e., the spa guests kicked, bathed or anointed themselves with the mud in various ways.

The moor is a unique selling point for the city; of Thuringia's 18 spas, Bad Lobenstein is the only one featuring a moor. Therefore, the resource cycle pertaining to the moor's mud should become more widely understood, for example by making nature experience areas accessible to tourists and locals in the future. In addition to the Helmsgrüner

Moor, which is the only accessible moor, there is other moorland in the area. For example, the moors in the Saaldorf district are rather difficult to access in the direction of the motorway. Planning concepts for moorland restoration with information on hydrological analyses, studies and a map with further information and on moorland locations were made available (see complete site brief data update, file „New Documents after Launch“).

According to internal research, there are documents from the beginning of the 1950s and 1990s with two significant moorland areas in Bad Lobenstein: (1) moor in Helmsgrün „Eibig“ as the largest moorland and (2) moor in Lichtenbrunn „Gemäßgrund“ (see complete site brief data update, file „New Documents after Launch“).

**5. Question: Are there other locations outside the Therme for mud therapies, such as mud baths?**

Answer: No. There are only mud therapies in the spa. There are also no mud therapies in the Median Clinic.

**6. Question: What quantities of mud are needed in the spa for 100,000 visitors a year?**

Answer: Currently, about 5 to 10 mud treatments take place in the spa every day. This means that a quantity of about 20 m<sup>3</sup> (corresponding to 20,000 litres per year) is needed.

**7. Question: What is the current status of the recultivation of the Helmsgrüner Moor? What is the general status of the moor? Should there be a moor biotope in Bad Lobenstein again?**

Answer: The quasi-natural recultivation of the moor is both a vision and a goal of the city. So far, the moor has been left to its own devices. The moor as it currently exists should receive special attention and be used for a design within the framework of the competition. These are very small and partly artificially filled moor areas. An expansive moor no longer exists. Environmental issues still need to be clarified. The development goal of the „Moorpatscherweg“ as a nature trail (see complete site brief, pages 34–38 and 46) is to foster learning experiences between the landscape and the city, in particular to make the diversity of flora and fauna around the Helmsgrüner Moor tangible and attractive for tourism. Whether it is possible to rehydrate the moor cannot be answered at the moment. The organisers expect the entries to provide

strategic and conceptual statements on moor renaturation and accessibility for tourists.

**8. Question: Are there any environmental problems with tourist use of the moor?**

Answer: So far, this is only a vision for the design of the Helmsgrüner Moor. Studies on recultivation, environmental assessments and follow-up planning for tourism are to be tackled in further processes. The political debate in the city on the future handling of the natural areas, tourism marketing and urban development is just beginning. The organisers therefore hope that the competition entries will provide high-quality spatial concepts and different proposals for the future design of the moorland areas for the city and health tourism.

**9. Question: Are there alternative plans or considerations of the city in case the extraction or storage of mud will not be possible in the future? What role do other resources, e.g., water, play?**

Answer: There are no brine springs in Bad Lobenstein. Only recently have considerations been made for the title of „Kneipp health spa“. There are already initial construction ideas for this, for example at the Kosel Brook. „Forest bathing“ also plays a role for the town. The aim is to remain a spa and to develop the town into a „climatic health resort“. Synergies and potentials for health tourism and urban development are seen especially with regard to the specification around the topic of psychosomatics. The predicate is currently being thought of in different directions and the awarding authorities expect new ideas, especially from the perspective of the „view from outside“. As mentioned in the competition announcement, „courageous models and spatial concepts are being sought for places of experience for accommodation and health architecture. The spa town wants to play a pioneering role in bringing together urban and health planning“ (complete site brief, page 46).

**10. Question: Can the clinic location or the clinical extension of the Median Clinic be described in more detail (see competition site brief)?**

Answer: The city is looking for new ways to accommodate clinic guests close to the city centre. Ideas are being sought for another clinic location. The Median Clinic is located outside the city and is not to be

explicitly expanded. The competition organisers are looking for an additional new clinic location with a new operator close to the city centre (see complete site brief, page 49).

**11. Question: What is the historical connection between the city and the Median Clinic? Are there concrete talks or regular exchanges? How should the Median Clinic sites be dealt with in the competition?**

Answer: There is a good exchange between the city and the Median Clinic. A new search for a location is not yet part of concrete talks with the Clinic. The Median Clinic is not looking for expansion space. Within the framework of the European competition, Bad Lobenstein is seeking to achieve a „strategic and spatial attractiveness, enhancement and expansion of its spa operations into an experience, wellness and health location“ (see complete site brief, page 46), in order to inspire further operators for a new clinic location.

**12. Question: Why is the city looking for another new clinic location? How big should the clinic be and what should make it stand out?**

Answer: The participants have a great deal of freedom when it comes to the conception and design of the new clinic location and additional bed capacities (see „Supplement to Clinic“ and „Supplement to Overnight Accommodation Architecture“, complete site brief page 49). The city hopes for exciting designs that will contribute to its effective appeal among new target groups for overnight stays from all over Europe and thus to an economic upswing for the city. This may include an expansion of the range of medical services available to spa guests (e.g., in the field of psychosomatics, wellbeing, wellness). Short-term spa stays for private payers are also conceivable. The city is therefore looking for ideas for a future-oriented and innovative clinic location; in other words, the location, the concept and the design should be proposed by the participants. The only requirement is that at least „50-100 beds“ should be provided that are „easily accessible by bike or on foot“ from the city centre (see complete site brief, page 49). The type of clinic can be freely chosen and the medical orientation can be oriented towards therapies for lungs, the heart or rheumatism.

In addition to hospital beds, there is a lack of beds in guesthouses and hotels in the city. It is therefore part of the competition task that the

participants combine „a conceptual vision for Bad Lobenstein as a health location with a spatial model“ „and visualise it by means of concrete architectural and planning designs“ (see complete site brief, page 46). This includes, in particular, addressing the question of the extent to which a new building of a classic hotel, a clinic or a medical accommodation facility to be defined can contribute to increasing the bed capacities of Bad Lobenstein as well as the broader public's awareness of and demand for the town and its facilities. The focus is on health-related applications. The awarding authorities would like to see exciting and varied accommodation and treatment concepts. Other concepts are also conceivable, such as medical centres or medical care centres (MVZ).

The current spa treatments in particular are to be further developed in the city. Above all, attractive offers should be developed that include links to medical therapies and wellness programmes in connection with the Ardesia thermal baths. Outpatient cures (averaging a 3 weeks' stay) are again in particular demand.

There are considerations to build a hotel near the Ardesia thermal bath and to use the thermal bath as a nucleus for urban development and tourism. The idea of a classic hotel at the thermal bath can be challenged and replaced by other accommodation concepts.

### **13. Question: What are the city's thoughts on the issue of vacancies in the city centre?**

Answer: Vacancies in the city should be used for urban development. The submitters are free to decide whether, for example, a new hotel should be built directly at the thermal spa or decentralised accommodation in existing buildings should be pursued. Also with regard to standards, the submitters should show possibilities for new target groups, regardless of whether accommodation is designed for simple or high-quality comfort. Decentralised concepts are very welcome, those concerning mobile homes. There is a high demand for mobile home locations in Bad Lobenstein, particularly near the motorway with sanitary facilities as well as gastronomy at the thermal spa near the town centre.



**14. Question: What is the unique selling point of Bad Lobenstein, from the perspective of the town?**

Answer: Bad Lobenstein's location between the „Thuringian Sea“ (water sports) and the Rennsteig (hiking) is particularly attractive for holiday seekers. The awarding authorities expect an exciting view of the town and its surroundings from the outside. Special features are to be identified in the submissions and worked out in terms of attractions and accommodation.

**15. Question: What are the needs of the local population in terms of recreational facilities? What do adolescents in Bad Lobenstein need?**

Answer: Spas like Bad Lobenstein have a high quality of life. Additional activities should offer perspectives for young people and are still to be developed (e.g., new cycle routes). Bad Lobenstein offers a varied selection of cultural events. For example, every fortnight there are spa concerts; there is a castle festival with civic theatre; and a town festival attracts many visitors to the town in summer. The Bad Lobenstein clubs also offer a variety of leisure activities.

Issues concerning a rural exodus preoccupy the city, as they do many rural areas. There is a shortage of skilled workers. Therefore, the city is looking for integrated concepts spanning health tourism and urban development that also create greater appeal among young people and young families. For example, the vacant school building can also be further developed and new educational offers can be thought up. There are playgrounds for small children in the city centre. There is also a lack of special attractions for adolescents in the area of sports, games and exercise. There is a very good selection of apprenticeships at local companies. Technical schools for health professions are located very far away.

**16. Question: In addition to the Therme, there is the Waldbad in Bad Lobenstein. Is the additional swimming area at the Therme actually necessary (see complete site brief, page 49 „Extension of Therme and surroundings“)?**

Answer: The Waldbad is currently owned by the municipality. It is only opened seasonally in the summer months (June to August). In the future, all health-related facilities in the spa could be combined under

the umbrella of the KGL (Kurgesellschaft Bad Lobenstein mbH). Due to the high demand, a pool for therapy and swimming is urgently needed in the spa (see complete site brief, page 49).

**17. Question: How is the topic of mobility currently being discussed in the city? Are there strategies or plans for traffic reduction in the city centre?**

Answer: The topic is dealt with in past and current debates in the city, especially via the years-long discussion of a car-free market. Residents and traders want to ensure access for cars to the city centre. A key predicate of the competition is the further reduction of traffic in the city centre. For cost reasons, a bypass road for the city was not realised. Federal and district roads in the city centre are not under the sovereignty of the city. The district and the state have little interest in road reconstruction. The city has a high willingness to reduce traffic; one-way street regulations are part of planning considerations. A municipal minibus service was introduced a few years ago and it is in high demand. The road rehabilitation of the city centre occurred in the 1990s and, due to street hierarchies, compromises had to be made between traffic routing and street design.

**18. Question: Are there any specific wishes of the Bad Lobenstein population for urban development?**

Answer: Pedestrian crossings and accessibility are big issues in the city. Cycling paths and safe cycling are also very important, especially due to e-bikes. There is criticism of the gastronomy in the city centre and the lack of places to convene, for example near the market and the thermal baths. There is only one small playground for small children in the town centre. Young people and older adolescents are looking for places to convene close to the town centre (e.g., for barbecues, sports, meeting places). In the future, spa facilities and leisure facilities should be considered as under the same umbrella. The youth centre in the city currently closes at 6 pm. In the future, the opening hours should be extended. The town has set up several barbecue areas at the Waldschänke.

**19. Question: Who owns the pavilion in the spa park?**

Answer: The pavilion belongs to the city. There was a café there. The staircase and the entire building are to be repaired. A concept and spatial programme for the building are still lacking.

**20. Question: Who owns the town pond? Are there any considerations for development? Can the pond be made swimmable?**

Answer: The city pond is owned by the city, as are the surrounding areas and those used by the fishing club. Gastronomic uses are conceivable here in the future. There have already been ideas for seating steps and landing stages for smaller boats at the pond, which have not been realised. Before the Second World War, the pond occupied a larger area and was to be enlarged in the course of the construction of the new thermal baths. However, this did not take place. Before the construction of the spa, the pond occupied an area up to and including the current parking spaces for cars. There are considerations to make the pond more attractive. It is the task of the competition to find new ideas for using the pond, the area around the spa and the forecourt of the spa.

**21. Question: How is water fed to the city pond and how deep is the lake?**

Answer: The lake is fed by the Lemnitzbach stream. At its deepest point, the depth of the pond is five metres.

**22. Question: Is there a map of all the small moors around Bad Lobenstein?**

Answer: Currently there is no corresponding map. An enquiry was made via the nature conservation authority of the district, which has not yet been answered (see also question 4).

**23. Question: How and where do the spa concerts take place?**

Answer: About 100 to 120 guests regularly attend the open-air concerts in front of the spa, which fetch high demand. In the future, the spa park can also be used for the concerts. Catering, seating and shaded areas are needed for the concerts.

**24. Question: What happens on the Festwiese or the Festplatz (near „Am Geheeg“)?**

Answer: The square is used as a fairground, as shooting festivals and circus events were held there. No spa concerts are held here because of the lack of infrastructure and proximity to the city centre, especially for older audiences.

**25. Question: Is there a vacancy map for Bad Lobenstein?**

Answer: A vacancy map is being developed and cannot yet be made available.

**26. Question: Is the former brewery empty (near „Gallenberg“)?**

Answer: No, the former brewery is not empty. Private event rooms and an engineering office are housed there.

**27. Question: Which businesses need truck delivery through the city centre? Are there talks about relocating the companies?**

Answer: In particular, a steel construction company needs lorry deliveries and through traffic for various timber transports is also a factor. It is not financially feasible to relocate the steel construction company and other industrial enterprises. There is a lack of sites for industrial development.

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