

OMSY

Leader+-project

Land use plan for the Keihonen area

Summary in English.

In the course of its own international LEADER +- financed OMSY Project (acronym for spontaneous land use planning together) the Pirkanmaa action group Kantri (registered association) made an unofficial land use plan for the Keihonen area in the municipality of Vesilahti. A student of architecture at the Tampere University of Technology, Ms. Sohvi Palola, completed her master's thesis in spring 2007 under the title Keihonen among the villages – measures required in the Kehonen area of Vesilahti. The land use plan takes account of both landowners and villagers' wishes regarding their living environment, and also, of course, of the views of the Municipality of Vesilahti regarding the development of the Keihonen area. Account of residents' and landowners' wishes was taken in more official discussion and at various meetings, likewise at less formal gatherings. In the planning of land use for a rural area in the immediate proximity of a large city it is important to achieve a binding solution in which it is possible to cater optimally for those matters deemed important by all interest groups. Landowners need a fair and just number of building locations *vis à vis* one another – if they have building ideas for their own use of with a view to selling – the rural landscape deemed important by residents must be preserved and the criteria imposed by the municipality regarding construction and land use (as stipulated in the legislation – Land Use Act) must be respected.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING AREA

Vesilahti is a rural municipality in the upper reaches of the Kokemajoki River in southern Pirkanmaa. To the north are Laikes Pyhäjärvi and Näsijärvi, to the east the smaller Lakes Hulausjärvi and Heinäjärvi gong out from Lake Pyhäjärvi. Vesilahti is surrounded by six municipalities: Lempäälä, Akaa, Kylmäkoski, Urjala, Vammala and Nokia, and on the opposite shores of Lake Pyhäjärvi by Pirkkala. Beyond Lempäälä and Pirkkala to the north lies the city of Tampere, by Finnish standards a major conurbation of some 2000,000 people, from which the journey to Keihonen is some 30 minutes.

For some nine thousand years the terrain has been very amenable to habitation. The varied environment continues to be favourable for farming, hunting and fishing. Continuous habitation for thousands of years has left ample traces: hundreds of Stone Age chisels and axes, silvered and gilded medals from the Iron Age, Catholic *objets d'art* from the Middle Ages and various more recent artefacts. In the 1300s Vesilahti has its own Catholic parish, which gave rise to the village of Vesilahti. The Municipality of Vesilahti was officially founded in 1869. On 1 January 2006 the population numbered 3, 831, the smallest population being recorded for 1985 at a mere 3007. (Internet pages of the Municipality of Vesilahti <http://www.vesilahti.fi>).

In the 21st century there is actually a danger that population growth may be too fast. Vesilahti is attractive and particularly so to families with small children. The proximity of the city of Tampere and the ever better communications tempt people to move to a traditional rural setting.

The planning area comprises the area from the eastern edge of Kostiala to the western part of Koskenkylä and Tarimaa on the southern side of Koskenkyläntie road. The village of Keohnen proper cannot be found on the map of Vesilahti, rather the various parts of the area belong to the villages of Narva, the main village (Kirkonkylä), Koskenkylä and Onkemäki. There are 80 year-round households in the area. The villages and groups of houses are evenly distributed along the main roads throughout the planning area. Most of the farms are separate units on their own moraine-based stretches of woodland. An exception to this is the farmyards on either side of the Koskenkylä road and the farms on the outskirts of Kostiala village. Most of the farms are on stretches of land rising out of open country between the villages of Koskenkylä, Tarimaa and Mustiainen.

The building stock of the area originates from various periods in time, but in general is on a very harmonious scale. Unfortunately no inventory has been made of the old buildings. There are several larger arable and stock farms in the area. There are some 60 landowners. The large number is due to the later 18th century distribution of land in oblong strips. Almost every strip begins from the main road and extends far to the edge of Vesilahti. The farmland is in active use. Much of the forest is owned by a major forest company. Otherwise the ownership and form of forest ownership resembles that of the farmland.

The Keihonen area has been largely sparsely populated by tenant farmers. Indeed, Keihonen is named after from a farm of the same name which stood by the intersection of the Vesilahti and Koskenkylä roads. In addition to the name, there is only one single derelict barn by the Koskenkylä road extant from the Keihonen farm, the other buildings having succumbed to the passage of time.

The landscape of the Keihonen planning area divides into three separate parts. In the west there is rolling, open farmland pierced deep by the shores of Lake Pyhäjärvi, the bay of Alhonlahti. In the centre on either side of Keihonen village there is stony and at times marshy woodland. The third part on the eastern side comprises the fields for which Vesilahti is nationally renowned.

THE APPEAL OF THE RURAL AREA

The factors generally considered to make the whole of rural southern Finland attractive include quality of life, space, peaceful environment, proximity of nature in security, freedom from pollution, freedom to build a home as one desires, the large building plots in the rural areas and the opportunities they afford for pottering about. Citydwellers are driven to live in the rural areas by a shortage of urban building plots and the poor availability of housing, likewise the high prices. Urban building construction is felt to be too tight.

The planning of land use in the villages was commenced because the villages lack a uniform and consistent plan to bring together the notions and wishes of various groups – villagers, landowners, municipalities. Urbanisation has caused villages to be deserted, thus to keep them alive and to ensure the continuation of the remaining services there is a need for new residents – preferably in a controlled manner. The objective is to arrive at potential construction areas, landowners' own

building area plans and future traffic arrangements in the same plan while also taking account of values pertaining to nature and historical considerations. Such a “village plan” is frequently preparations for a forthcoming overall plan or small-scale piece of rural planning.

THE PLANNING SITUATION IN KEIHONEN

The only plan in force is that for the Lake Pyhäjärvi shoreline. In the planning area there are no larger scale plans. On the other hand there are two separate areas in need of planning in core locations. one of these is located at Keihonen proper around the intersection of the Koskenkylä and Vesilahti roads and the other at the Kehro junction / around the fairly new Mustiainen collection of buildings. The larger Koskenkylä area in need of planning lies adjacent to the planning area in the east.

NEW BUILDINGS IN THE RURAL LANDSCAPE

Each village is different and an entity of its own formed above all by the villagers and the history, traditions and environment of the village. Part of Vesilahti and a very large part of the Keihonen planning area has been designated in the recent Pirkanmaa 1 plan as an area of national cultural landscape (confirmed by the Ministry of the Environment Finland on 29 March 2007). Thus the site of a building and the building itself are required to blend with the landscape as a whole, otherwise they will spoil the view. The Vesilahti cultural landscape includes open fields and extensive far-reaching vistas. If building locations are not planned in advance in a centralised manner, or if altogether too many are planned, the beautiful village and rural ambience may be ruined.

It is characteristic of rural building that various functions are allocated to different buildings. The yard milieu includes a main building, possibly also an old main building, outbuildings and perhaps a sauna building. Several such setups have been gloriously preserved in the Keihonen area. To these newer buildings have been added as required, without compromising the natural state of the yard or the surrounding environment. The taste in building construction among the residents of Keihonen is markedly traditional and mindful of its compatibility with the landscape. On the other hand the taste of new residents possible moving from the urban areas may differ from the style prevailing in the Keihonen area.

The optimal construction site is a moraine with a gentle slope to the south or west, but in the Keihonen area these excellent sites are largely occupied and built. Right on a hill the winds may be strong while in a dip the micro climate may be damp. When building on a northerly slope demands care in the arrangement of the rooms and what they overlook. However, not everyone prefers a home bathed in sunshine, but facing north has implications for energy costs, daylight, the melting of snow in spring, the drying out of the earth and many other considerations.

PLANNING PLACES FOR BUILDINGS

Scattering building plots in the sparsely populated area between the four larger villages should be carefully considered. There are several other areas in Vesilahti - villages - which are and will continue to be very attractive. It does not make sense to cause the municipality difficulties by marking out potential construction sites all along the edge of the forest and in all the forest clearings, not to mention proposing the fields as locations for detached houses. The small municipality cannot support sudden major changes in its population base. Fortunately the Municipality of Vesilahti is well aware of this and no vast handing out of building plots is envisaged.

Thus it is even more important that the future plans of landowners and their building areas on their own lands should be recorded. This makes it possible to direct the entity in the desired way. The municipal officials are then aware where an increase in the population is to be expected, where the landowners may be keen to sell building plots to outsiders, or to what school new pupils can be expected in the next few years. By and large the landowners have a very realistic attitude to their lands. It does not make sense to sell good clay fields for housebuilding, if necessary tenants for the fields can be found close at hand, and there are also buyers of fields for cultivation. In places the forest areas are very rocky and even steep, so not all the wasteland not included in fields and forests can be called good building land. In a sparsely populated area the size of plots should be big enough; there should be room to build both a main building and the various accompanying outbuildings.

There are a total of 21 building sites forming part of the landowners' future plans. Each proposal was made personally by the landowners for the project. Most of their places for building construction are likely at some point to come on the market for sale to outsiders, but the construction dreams of the landowners themselves and their immediate families, for both permanent housing and second homes were also included.

The inclusion of the landowners' proposals for construction sites does not tie any stakeholder's hands. Nor does the inclusion of landowners in the project compel anyone to build or sell their proposed construction sites at any juncture. Likewise matters pertaining to building permits must be handled through official channels, but the possibility also exists that prior knowledge of the case in the municipality might expedite or facilitate the process.

There is no base in reality to the theoretical construction sites. No note was taken of the borders of land ownership, but attention was indeed paid not only to road, water and drainage options but also to the appropriateness of the setting and the points of the compass. There were some examples of construction on a northern slope, but this was a gentle incline and there were other favourable factors. Most of the theoretical construction sites will never become reality, but some of them may one day serve to precipitate a new construction project. The number of theoretical construction sites (43) gives an indication of the maximum extent to which a fragile and traditional rural landscape can support modern building construction.

ROUTES FOR LIGHT TRAFFIC

Due largely to the communal effort of residents in summer 2006 a light traffic route was completed from the Valkkistentie crossroads to the Harjulantie crossroads, on which light traffic has been directed to go along the old artillery road to Ylämäki school. A natural continuation to this new light traffic thoroughfare in Koskenkylä would be a similar route alongside the Koskenkyläntie road as far as the Vesilahdentie road.

An appropriate line for light traffic is on the north side of the road almost as far as the old gravel pit. Before the old hut it would be necessary for the light traffic route to change sides. The electric power line traverses Koskenkyläntie some time before the hut, and a crossing for the light traffic road could be made using a pedestrian crossing around there. For the remainder of the journey to Vesilahdentie the light traffic route could go alongside the Koskenkyläntie road on the southern side.

It is more appropriate for the Vesilahdentie light traffic to go by the present stretches of road which in the present road plans are condemned to demolition and the pieces of decent light traffic route between them.

BUS SHELTERS

Throughout the Keihonen area the bus shelters are tilting, miserable, tin structures lacking shelter. The bus stops are to be renewed in any case in the area of the Vesilahti road projects, so there would also be an opportunity to create a harmonised look over a greater area. The main material must be painted wood covered in either black felt roofing or corrugated iron painted black. There would be a temptation to use black creosote but this entails the risk of damage to clothing. Thus linseed oil paint would be appropriate for a rural bus shelter, the colour being red, okra or off-white.

THE KOSKENKYLÄNTIE WASTE DUMP

The shabby-looking waste dump by the Koskenkyläntie road needs a facelift. A 600-litre dry waste container would probably be sufficient for the waste from the area together with two 600-litre containers for waste paper. Biowaste in the Keihonen area is composted, and there are collection points for metal and glass in the main village (Kirkonkylä). The size of the waste shelter is indicative, thus it could be larger or smaller should the quantity of waste in the area be found to be different from what is envisaged.

For the sake of harmony the materials for the waste shelter are the same as for the bus shelters. The wooden parts are to be painted with linseed oil paint and the roofing material is to be either felt roofing or corrugated iron painted black. It would be advisable to use asphalt for the base of the waste collection point so as to facilitate container emptying.

Sohvi Palola, undergraduate in architecture
Kantri ry