

# DOPPELTÜR mediation project Project dossier – pre-project

Short Version



## 1. Summary

The Doppeltür Meeting Centre aims to make the fascinating and hitherto little-known Jewish/Christian history of coexistence in Canton Aargau's Surb valley accessible to a broad public and, through it, to stimulate an examination of contemporary social issues. The aim is to attract 30,000 visitors a year. This unique and challenging project is scheduled to be realised by 2024.

Established in 2016, the Doppeltür association purchased a historic double-door house on Lengnau village square in 2018 with the intention of turning it into a meeting centre. This location is arguably the project's greatest strength: presenting this unique story in a historically correct location provides an authentic setting that would not be achievable anywhere else in Switzerland. The aim is for a modern presentation to showcase the history of Jewish/Christian coexistence in the Surb valley, which is unique in Switzerland (mainly in the municipalities of Lengnau and Endingen, in which Jews were demonstrably permitted to settle from 1622 and 1678 onwards respectively).

Doppeltür is the only institution of its kind in Europe to address Jewish-Christian dialogue. The project is supported by the Swiss Federal Office of Culture. The Jewish Cultural Trail has recently been included in Switzerland's intangible cultural heritage and is on the UNESCO list of "Living Traditions". In addition, the Doppeltür project has been one of the cultural objectives of Canton Aargau for the past three years (Canton Aargau Cultural Concept, Cultural Policy Objectives 2017 – 2022). Canton Aargau's project also informed the debate on the "Federal Council Message on the Promotion of Culture in the Years 2021-2024".

## 2. Background

The villages of Endingen and Lengnau in Canton Aargau's Surb valley look back on a history that is unique in Switzerland: for around a hundred years – between 1776 and the introduction of political equality and freedom of establishment in 1866 – the Jews of the then Confederation were permitted almost exclusively to settle permanently in these two villages. As a result, a coexistence of Jewish and Christian communities developed in what were, at the time, the only "Jewish villages" in Switzerland. The everyday life, culture and religion of both groups of the population had to be accommodated in a very confined space, which is how a collection of buildings and institutions of Jewish life – virtually intact to this day – came to be created in Endingen and Lengnau.

The Doppeltür Meeting Centre is aimed at four main target groups: individuals, families, groups and school classes with an interest in culture. The project is pursuing the following objectives:

- Presentation of the unique history of Jewish/Christian coexistence in the Surb valley.
- Jewish/Christian dialogue.
- Raising awareness of overarching themes such as tolerance, migration and multiculturalism.
- To serve as a place of encounter and starting point for cultural paths.
- To serve as a place of mediation and dialogue in the form of events and workshops.

The concept summarised here is based on many years of preparatory work by the Doppeltür association and its project development groups.

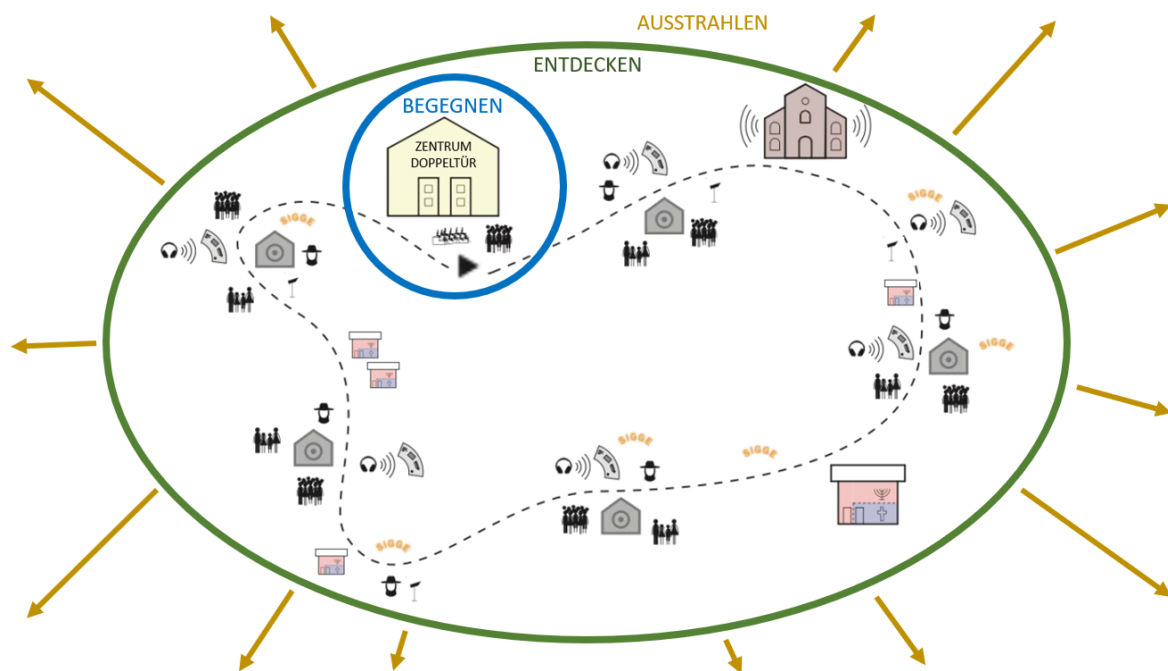
## 3. Mediation concept

Doppeltür is aimed at a broad audience from all over Switzerland and further afield. It addresses individual visitors as well as groups with a range of themes by means of bespoke offerings. A

particular focus is the young, i.e. families and schools. The mediation concept is modular so as to enable it to develop in line with new research findings.

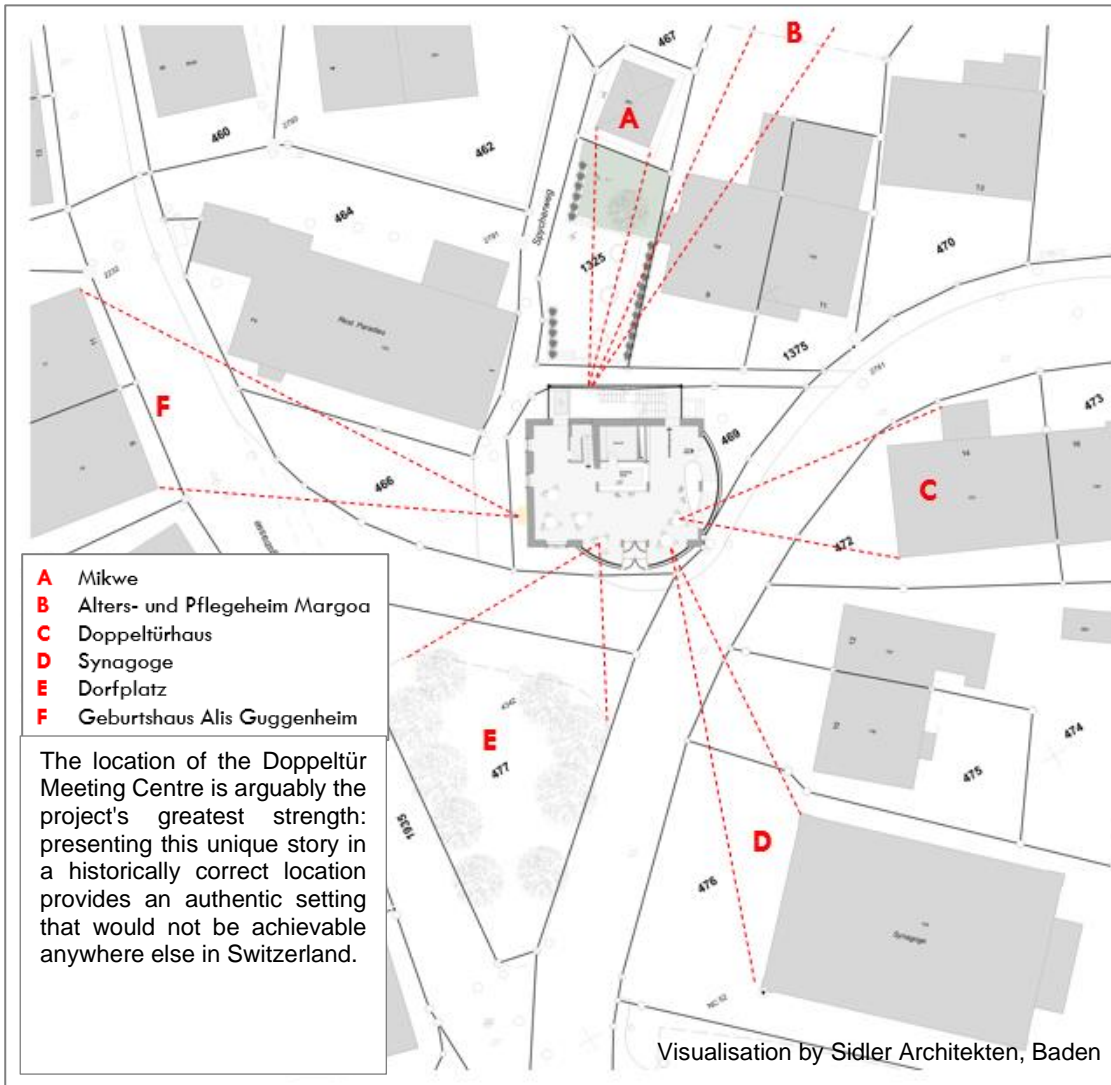
Doppeltür tackles highly emotive themes such as religion and the coexistence of cultures. A section of the audience it addresses has little prior knowledge of the Jewish faith and the differences between, and commonalities of, Judaism and Christianity. The Doppeltür project takes as its starting point the individual visitors' attitudes regarding the subject matter and their awareness of it. Providing them with coherent information, it invites reflection on the prejudices and myths surrounding the topics discussed here. Doppeltür provides a lens through which visitors discover the history of Jewish-Christian coexistence in the Surb valley. The project thus serves to raise awareness of the unique cultural heritage, its respectful preservation and enduring continuation. Furthermore, against this background, you are invited to engage with yourselves, your own convictions and perceptions, and to enter into dialogue with other visitors. As social actors, the visitors leave a lasting mark on the project through their participation.

To achieve its vision, Doppeltür is pursuing three overarching goals. The first is to create a central *place of encounters* that serves as a meeting and starting point and as a place for mediation and dialogue in the form of events and workshops – this is to be the Doppeltür Centre. The second is to facilitate the *discovery* of sites on the Jewish Cultural Trail in a variety of interactive forms, while the third is to *disseminate* the unique history of the Surb valley throughout Switzerland and abroad in partnership with related institutions.



#### 4. Exhibition concept

The stately double-door edifice in Lengnau has been earmarked as the aforementioned central place of encounters. Ideally located on the village square in the immediate vicinity of the synagogue and mikvah, it is being developed and expanded as the association's main point of contact – its beating heart, so to speak. As a multifunctional venue, it will host a number of central functions.

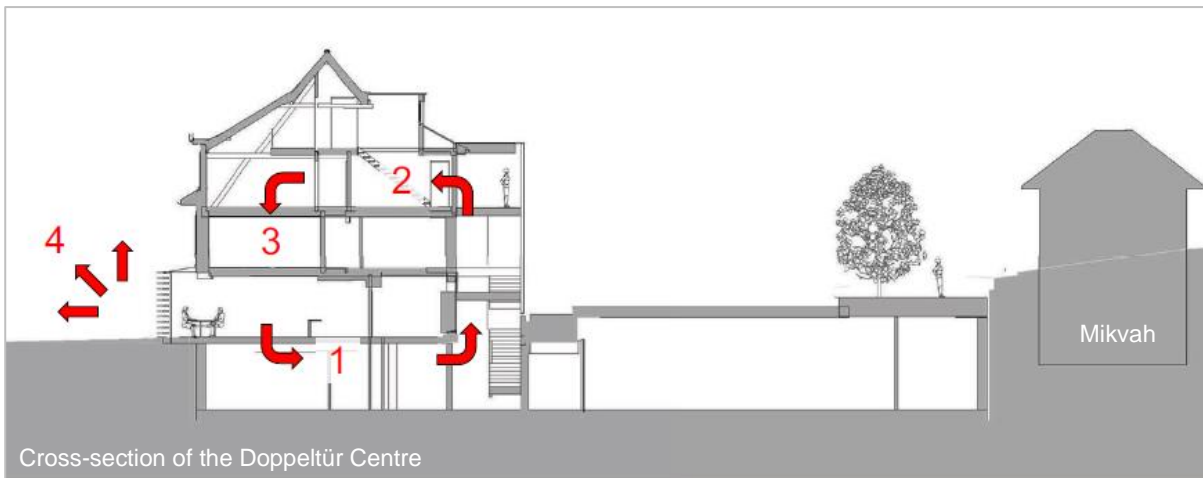


The Doppeltür Centre does not see itself as a museum, but as a place for exploring the coexistence of people with different origins, and for “encountering” history at the original sites. The Centre is working closely with Baden’s History Museum and is envisaging collaboration with the Höfli Museum in Bad Zurzach, the Jewish Museums of Basel, Hohenems and Gailingen, and Christian institutions such as the Paulus Akademie.

## 4.1 Production

The Doppeltür Centre's exhibition concept is composed of four mediation components, which together introduce visitors to Jewish-Christian coexistence in a way that is engaging, informative and interactive. The first section outlines the history of the Surb valley, while the second brings the narrative back to the present. The third component focuses on self-awareness, encouraging you to explore personal issues of coexistence and mutual respect across several thematic areas. The fourth component of the concept is the Jewish Cultural Trail and the vicinity of the two villages of Lengnau and Endingen.

Based on the actual internal arrangement of the future Doppeltür Centre in Lengnau, the four mediation components give rise to the following narrative flow, which also serves as the common thread: 1. Submersion / 2. Emergence / 3. Immersion / 4. Wingspreading



The double-door building in Lengnau will host spectacular multimedia productions designed to introduce visitors to the subject matter. The modern exhibition technology used will serve to convey both knowledge and emotions. The exhibition as a whole will attempt to create proximity to the people involved, thus making them more relatable. Audio recordings featuring the oral history of contemporary Jewish and Christian witnesses will be made, and the rich diversity of existing historical source material leveraged. The memories, stories and historical material collected will be deployed within the Doppeltür Centre to create an additional tangible dimension for enhanced authoritativeness.

The exhibition will act as a motivating agent, with the visitors themselves addressed as experts. Particularly in the third component (Immersion), they will be invited to bring their own values to bear in the proceedings. The Doppeltür exhibition will repeatedly reference the setting of the Surb valley with its villages of Endingen and Lengnau. Hotspots such as the old double-door houses, the two synagogues, the two mikvahs, the Jewish cemetery on the perimeter of the two municipalities and numerous other places of Jewish life in Endingen and Lengnau will feature prominently.

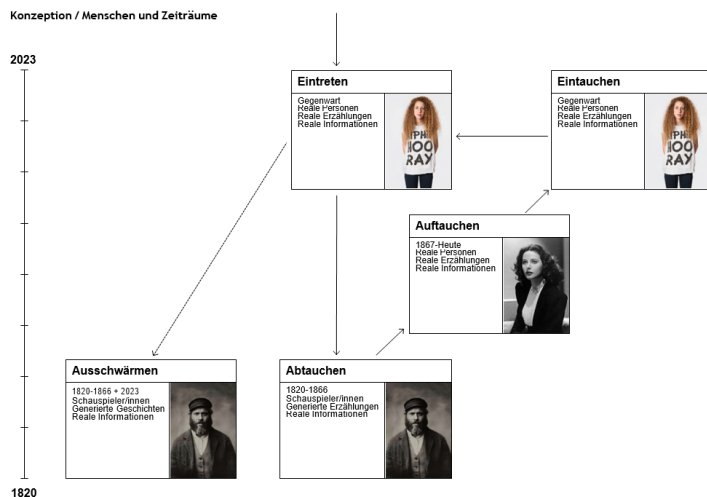


Following one of the various routes along the Jewish Cultural Trail, visitors will be able to see for real the places they encountered (virtually) in the Doppeltür Meeting Centre. Info-panels along the Cultural Trail, group tours with expert guides and self-guided tours using audio or media technology will provide visitors with additional information or activities, depending on the selected route. All this will address the needs of the various target groups.



## 4.2 Scenographic concept

Like the curatorial concept, the scenographic concept also places people and their coexistence at the centre of the presentation at every level. It sets out to use this and the location at the original sites to generate identification potential and to create openness among the visitors to engage with contemporary questions of coexistence. As a whole, it seeks to offer an intense, enduring and compelling experience through uniqueness.



### 4.2.1 Entry: the present

The ground floor of the Doppeltür Centre is devoted to the welcome. This features six real people having very different links with Emdingen and Lengnau. Displayed on video screens and audible via one-hand earpieces, they talk about their backgrounds and their lives today. Alongside individuals who have always lived here, others have only recently moved here or live elsewhere but have their family origins here.

Derived from the themes of water, the plunge pool and coexistence, a partial wall design with theme-specific wall tiles is proposed in the entrance area. The symbols of various religions are used to make tiles in subtly differing shades of blue, creating layers of sensual ornamentation. The ornamentation generated in this context could also be used on other floors and in other materials.



#### 4.2.2 Submersion: the historic Surb valley 1820-1866

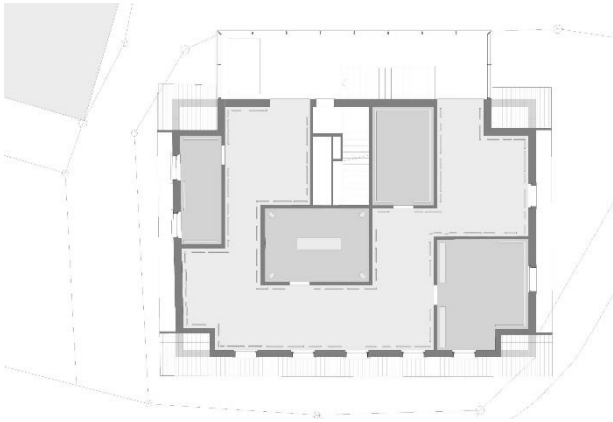
The chosen floor plan variant consisting of two total and four partial cinema rooms offers appealing room sizes and an economical use of projection technology. Depending on the time allowed for room changes, group starts are possible every 18 to 20 minutes.

To tell the various stories on video, the plan is to film costumed actors in front of a green screen so that the scenes can receive the appropriate backgrounds in post-production. To avoid time-consuming casting, the aim is to work with a theatre company (complete with costume department), as in previous productions. Alongside set scripts, keyword-based scripts are also conceivable around which the actors could improvise.

#### 4.2.3 Emergence: 1867-present

In order to present the thematic fields, events and stories to be depicted after the liberalisation of the legislation up to the present, a connecting “time tunnel” is proposed that relates these themes to each other and places them in the timeline of world history. Within this chronology, the use of a range of media is conceivable to showcase objects, including text, audio and video. The themes are differentiated through use of colour. Here, too, people should play an important role within the thematic fields.

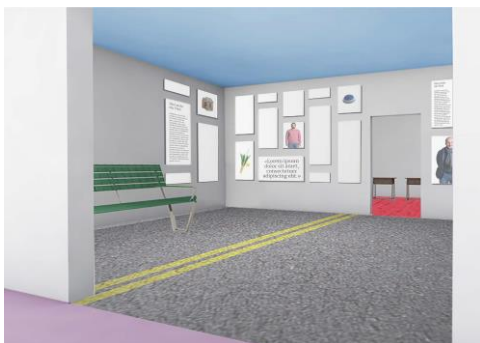
Distributed along time tunnel are a number of focus spaces in which topics or contents can be presented in more detail using specific media forms. This could include family chronicles and documentaries, as well sound and film installations.



#### 4.2.4 Immersion: the present

This floor features a design that differs according to the rooms but is still coherent as a whole, all done through the use of floor coverings and furnishings derived from the respective themes. For example, the room devoted to education and school has a red linoleum floor and is furnished with school desks. In addition to the use of real materials, photo-based rendering is also conceivable for the floor coverings.

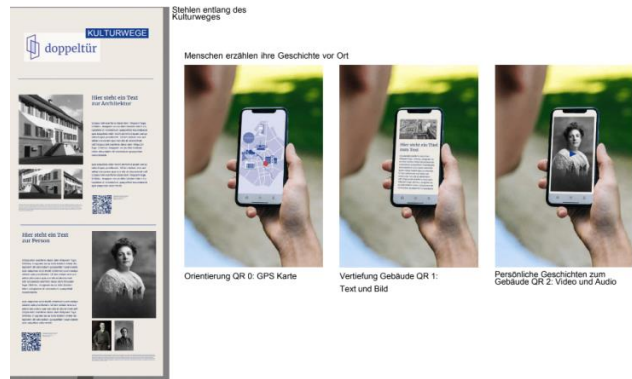
The exhibition here is conceivable in any media capable of serving the respective themes. In order to reprise the production values of the entrance area, it could be enriching to have the people appearing there reappear and speak here in an interview format. Touch-screens integrated into items of furniture allow visitors to leave comments in all the rooms. To do this, they insert their personal Doppeltür key into a keyhole and answer the questions using a rating system. The focus is on a complex contemporary religious and social situation. The exhibition offers an intelligent way of approaching multiple issues, some of which are socially emotive. The Doppeltür Centre is open – religiously, culturally, ethnically and socio-politically.





#### 4.2.5 Stepping out

Offering a view of the synagogue and other double-door houses, both sides of the circular entrance structure on the ground floor feature information points equipped with touch screens. This is where visitors can once again meet the various people they will encounter on the tours, in addition to wide range of offerings, routes and buildings. The media to be deployed are shown on another page. Visitors following the Culture Trail come across columns presenting brief information about the buildings and the people. By scanning QR codes, visitors can obtain more details about what they have read and watch videos in which people tell their story regarding that particular location.



#### 4.3 Offerings for schools, workshops and activity programmes

The Doppeltür Meeting Centre should be explicitly available for visits by schools and for workshops and events. A separate room in the basement which can accommodate 80 persons is envisaged for this purpose. It could also accommodate concerts, readings and lectures. For example, debates on current issues could be held at Sunday matinees using interactive electronic media. For larger events, other venues can be used, such as the synagogue in Lengnau.

Alongside the permanent mediation project, special school modules are planned. Those modules, such as guided tours for schools as well as targeted group-oriented workshops, are aimed in particular at upper secondary school classes (secondary level 1) and middle schools / vocational schools (secondary level 2) and are oriented towards Switzerland's "Lehrplan 21" curriculum.



As part of "Dialogue en route" (a project of the IRAS COTIS inter-faith working group), a number of pupils gave the Jewish Cultural Trail a trial run. (Photos: Marie-Christine Andres Schürch)

#### 4.4 Second implementation phase

The sub-projects “Lengnau synagogue” and “Enacted double-door house” are important elements of the overall concept. The aim is to implement these two projects in a second phase from 2024 and integrate them into the overall concept.

##### Lengnau synagogue

The two largest, culturally most important Jewish buildings in Eendingen and Lengnau municipalities are the well-preserved synagogues. The synagogue in Eendingen will continue to be used for Jewish acts of worship; Lengnau synagogue, meanwhile, is to be opened to the public, due to its location in the village centre next to the Doppeltür centre. Inscribed in the canton’s register of heritage monuments in 1963, its exterior was restored in 1983/84, followed by the interior in 1995-1997. The aim is to make the synagogue stand out more in the overall concept.



Left: the synagogue in Lengnau. (Photo: Barbara Ludwig)  
Right: inside Lengnau synagogue. (Photo: Roy Oppenheim)

In addition to guided tours, the idea in the medium term is for the synagogue to be used for events that are in keeping with a former house of prayer. Reversible elements in the existing infrastructure and other media elements will create opportunities to showcase the Lengnau synagogue in a variety of scenarios. A control system will enable audio, cinematic elements and light to create an immersive environment. This will breathe life into the rooms. Visitors will be able to imagine how the synagogue was originally used.

Atmospheric audio/sound installations of this nature appeal to a wide audience. They lend themselves to both individual and group visits. The structural interventions in the synagogue are minimal and reversible. They should be planned in consultation with the owners and the historical monuments agency and should not be allowed to compromise the dignity of the building.

##### Enacted double-door house

The Cultural Trail takes in a rich variety of double-door houses in which Jewish-Christian coexistence is strikingly manifested.

At some point in the future, a second double-door house will be acquired and incorporated into the Doppeltür Meeting Centre concept in Lengnau. This re-enacted double-door house is intended to show in a historical setting how Jews and Christians lived and worked side-by-side.

It will offer insights into life back then in the form of reconstructed everyday scenes and media productions using artefacts, written documents and so forth, allowing visitors to experience how double-door houses were inhabited by the Jewish and Christian communities together. Topics such as food, religious rituals, clothing and religious festivals show the commonalities and differences between the two faith communities. Moreover, the impact on everyday ways of life – and how these

had to be adapted – arising from the proximity of Jews and Christians can be discussed whenever appropriate.



Enactment of a double-door house: one door for Christians – one for Jews.  
(Both visualisations by Stauffenegger + Partner.)

## 5. Architecture

The building with a gable roof comprising two dwellings was completed in the latter half of the 18th century. Several changes of ownership later, the house parts were united in 1866 and the façade facing the square refashioned to be typically symmetrical. The original two-dwelling structure remains legible in the structure, however. The ground floor of the larger part of the house is being converted into a shop selling spices, while the double door at the back on the mezzanine floor will provide access to the flats, probably at the same time. The building was lent its present Heimatstil style by the addition of a storey and half-hipped roof in 1934. The symmetry of the façade facing the square, now accentuated by a bay window, transforms this standalone building into the stateliest edifice on the village square, aided and abetted by the dormer that is almost as wide as the façade itself. An asymmetrical shop window was inserted on the ground floor when the shop was extended around 1960/70.

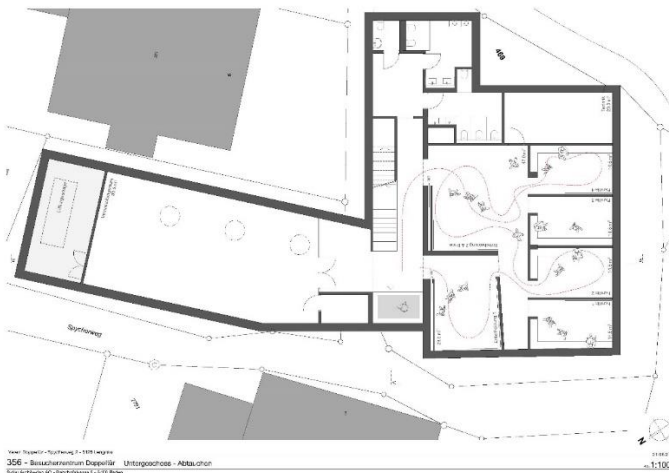


Visualisation of the south-west



## 5.1 Design concept

From a historical monuments standpoint, this building in the Heimatstil vernacular is worth preserving as a contemporary witness. As such, this prestigious standalone building will be repurposed, while retaining its characteristics and dimensions. The rear extensions and complicated roof extensions with trailing dormers are replaced by a simple, clear volume. The space available for the planned building programme is very limited, so a basement will be inserted beneath the whole of the existing house and garden. The removal of the loggia behind the house allows for targeted access to all floors. Thanks to the earlier conversions, the existing building structure lends itself well to a flexible exhibition area. The small-scale room structure on the first floor, together with the double door and the narrow stairs, is original and will be integrated into the concept.



The original symmetrical square-facing facade will be restored and supplemented with a new axially symmetrical entrance area. The facades of the main building are being carefully renovated. New paintwork to the woodwork will eliminate the rather heavy expression of the gable facades.



## 6. Project plan

The following project plan provides an overview of the planned steps until the Doppeltür mediation project is commissioned.

<b>Phase 1 (organisation)</b>	<b>2019 / completed</b>
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- Installation of an administrative office and project management / definition of organisational structure
- Further development of the Doppeltür mediation project / room concept / building surveys
- Fundraising documentation / start of fundraising

<b>Phase 2 (preliminary project / exhibition concept / fundraising)</b>	<b>2020 / completed</b>
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- Preliminary project: conversion of Doppeltür Centre (architectural concept / landscaping)
- Operator options / operating concept / business plan
- Fundraising for financing conversion / exhibition

<b>Phase 3 (preliminary construction project/scenography competition/fundraising)</b>	<b>2021 / completed</b>
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- Exhibition and mediation concept: project organisation / project development
- School module: master plan and milestones / project organisation / project launch
- Property: consultation with the historical monuments agency and authorities / preliminary project completed (3rd quarter) / start of construction project / detailed studies / cost estimate
- Fundraising for expansion, exhibition and school module
- Establishment of foundation

<b>Phase 4 (construction project / exhibition concept / educational concept)</b>	<b>2022, 2023</b>
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- Submission of planning application, planning permission process, tenders, start of implementation project
- Board of trustees / conclusion of research / scenographic concept
- Educational concept
- Development of operational organisation and operating concept (incl. marketing concept)

<b>Phase 5 (realisation)</b>	<b>2023, 2024</b>
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- Realisation of building
- Realisation of expansion / exhibition
- Preparation of operational organisation / recruitment of Head of Operations

<b>Phase 6 (Completion / preparation for operation / opening)</b>	<b>2024, 2025</b>
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- Recruitment of employees for operations
- Completion of building / commissioning of the Doppeltür Centre
- Official opening



## 7. Support

Numerous foundations, companies and private individuals are already supporting the Doppeltür mediation project. In addition, Canton Aargau granted the project start-up funding of CHF 4 million in December 2020.

The Swiss Federal Office of Culture is also supporting the Doppeltür project and has authorised it to bear the label “Living Traditions”.



Further information regarding support is available on the website [www.doppeltuer.ch](http://www.doppeltuer.ch).

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**Illustrations:** see captions in the text.

**Mediation and exhibition concept:** Verein Doppeltür, Endingen

**Design:** Verein Doppeltür, Endingen