

# Rensenpark Emmen

**The Municipality of Emmen is actively seeking a consortium to collaborate on the Horizon Europe NEB call 2026-01-BUSINESS-03 “Approaches to reuse vacant, obsolete or underutilised spaces.”**

The municipality of Emmen is situated in the north-eastern part of the Netherlands, within the Province of Drenthe. Home to nearly 110,000 residents, Emmen consists of a vibrant city center surrounded by a mix of smaller towns and rural communities. Emmen is known for its strong industrial sector, green landscapes, and the renowned Wildlands Zoo.

Emmen has undergone significant transformations over the years. One of the city’s most unique new redevelopment projects is the Rensenpark, located in the heart of city center Emmen. Until 2016 this location was home to the city’s zoo. Rensenpark offers a unique opportunity to create something unparalleled in the region; a vibrant and innovative city park that blends nature, culture, creativity, and history.



Former underground elephant shelter

## **Presence of “vacant, obsolete & underutilised spaces”**

Rensenpark includes a range of buildings and structures that are vacant, temporarily in use, or no longer serving their original purpose. This diversity makes the area a great living-lab for developing and validating a systematic approach to analysing, prioritising, and sustainably reusing underutilised spaces.

## **Challenges**

The municipality has identified several key development questions for Rensenpark:

- How can we create a diverse, cultural, and above all creative heart within the park?
- How can we strengthen connections between education, businesses, and creative makers?
- How can the park be designed to encourage movement, activity, and social interaction?
- How can historical heritage be combined with sustainable forms of innovation?
- How can sustainable solutions be integrated into the public space and buildings?

## Potential of Rensenpark within the Consortium

- **Concrete test area**

Rensenpark offers a diverse mix of underutilised and outdated buildings, infrastructure, and landscape elements. This combination makes the area highly suitable for analysing and validating the systematic approach required by the EU call.

- **Local challenges**

The area has clear ambitions related to culture, health, creativity, and sustainability, all of which align directly with the scope and objectives of the call.

- **Financial dimension**

The call emphasises the need to understand barriers to reuse, such as limited resources, ownership structures, and legal constraints, as well as the need to identify financing mechanisms and ways to enable the renovation or conversion of underutilised spaces. Within Rensenpark, there is a clear challenge in determining how underused buildings, historic structures, and public functions can be sustainably financed and managed within one integrated area.

- **Space for co-creation**

The municipality collaborates closely with residents, makers, cultural organisations, and local education and business networks, creating the conditions for a meaningful form of co-creation.

- **Suitable scale**

The park is compact enough to allow for detailed and in-depth analysis, while large enough to accommodate multiple underutilised locations that can be studied within the same project area.



Overview of the Rensenpark location

## Conclusion

Rensenpark is a highly suitable pilot location for the NEB call “Approaches to reuse vacant, obsolete or underutilised spaces.” The park brings together the necessary physical cases, local challenges, participatory context, and financial considerations that are central to this call.

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