

## Day 3

### Renovation and Circular Economy:

#### *Materials at the Heart of the Transition towards a Sustainable buildings*

Seminar held in English

Wednesday 17th January 2024

At Maison de la Poste, Gare Maritime

Tour & Taxis – Rue Picard 7, 1000 Brussels

### AFTERNOON

13:30 - 17:00 | Guided Tours of Sustainable Buildings

Group 1 – 'Ixelles'

### Usquare



Bringing people, city and knowledge together: such is the ambition of Usquare.brussels.

- The name in itself symbolises this conjunction:
- the capital U refers to the universities, ULB and VUB, which are involved in the project;
- 'square' refers to the quadrangle of the historic enclosed site where this new district will be created, but also evokes the potential for social encounters in public spaces and local facilities;
- the combination of 'U' and 'square' embodies the union of universities and city around a project that will benefit the citizens;
- and 'brussels' locates the whole project firmly in the Brussels Region.

This union results from the conjunction of two proactive initiatives.

First, that of ULB and VUB, which wish to become more integrated in the city and engage in its development for the benefit of its people as they prepare to create together a new expertise centre of international importance.

And second, that of the Brussels-Capital Region, which wishes to meet the needs of its inhabitants in terms of housing, facilities and quality of life, and aims to reinforce its status as Belgium's largest student city, a leading university hub in Europe, a national capital and international metropolis, a crossroads of cultures amid a plethora of initiatives in collective intelligence, research and innovation. The Regional Government believes that promoting these assets, increasing the integration of the student population in the urban fabric and giving a warm welcome to these positive initiatives in the region will be beneficial to its development and hence to the people of Brussels.

The Region and the universities have seized the opportunity to put these intentions into practice offered by the departure of the Federal Police from the former barracks in Ixelles, which are ideally located near several major campuses, at a place where a number of young and vibrant districts converge, and on a public transport hub.

The Region has therefore decided to purchase this former military complex from the Federal State with a view to:

- opening it up to the city;
- promoting its heritage;
- developing family and student housing;
- laying out welcoming and attractive public spaces;
- creating local facilities that are open to use by residents of neighbouring districts;
- and accommodating a sustainable food court and a pioneering project of the universities relating to research, knowledge dissemination and sharing, international exchanges, entrepreneurship and innovation, certain elements of which are supported by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

Usquare.brussels thus involves the conversion of an enclosed military complex from the early 20th century into an open and diverse living space fit for the 21st century: not a campus, but a genuine new part of the city, with all that this implies, a future Brussels district that is diverse and dynamic, urban and welcoming, university-centred and international, sustainable and innovative.

## Vandeuren



Complete renovation of the Vandeuren block (built surface area: 14,232M<sup>2</sup>). With the buildings renovated and restructured, the number of homes is reduced from 160 to 132 and new facilities are added. Shared spaces are being created and the central garden is being turned into a communal meeting place.

The project is set in a very restrictive and dense context of built-up social housing estates and is firmly rooted in reality. Despite the many existing constraints, the decision was made to preserve as much of the existing building as possible, unlike the neighbouring block, which was completely demolished to create something completely different.

This is an interesting and rational project, with new spaces open to all local residents and managed by neighbourhood associations.

The innovation of the approach lies in the enhancement of the existing site, the opening up of the site, the creation of new uses, the planting of the interior of the block, the contribution of added value to the neighbourhood, the reconstruction using reused materials and the successful gamble of doing a lot with a little.

The project offers a range of communal and public spaces that, although small, meet the needs of the neighbourhood.

From an environmental point of view, the project's approach is very good and presents a number of exemplary points.

The circular economy developed in the project is also exemplary. Maximum conservation of the buildings goes very far in all aspects, and the intelligence of the intervention lies at this level, as all the developments adapt to this factor.

Vandeuren is a project that meets a number of criteria, proposing spaces that have been renovated and revisited with particular attention to contemporary uses and the quality of the pre-existing buildings.