

Neo

MOVING SLOWLY FORWARDS



The site covers a large area near to the Heysel stadium.

The Neo project has been the subject of much discussion in Brussels for some time. The Heysel plateau on which it is located represents an opportunity for the City to reinvigorate an area currently used for exhibitions, but with little in the way of daily life.

The Neo project is located to the north of Brussels, around the city's famous Atomium (the symbol of the 1958 Universal Exposition) and the Brussels Expo exhibition halls. A project covering an area of some 60 hectares, Neo aims to bring new life to this part of Brussels, with a major shopping centre, a large conference centre, leisure and tourist activities including a show and events hall and a hotel complex, residential accommodation, offices and open public areas. The existing 'Trade Mart' wholesale market for retailers is not currently set to be affected by the development. The presence of the (relatively new) Heysel sports stadium and how this interacts with the project, also has to be taken into account. The city of Brussels owns all of the land concerned by Neo, while Trade Mart is in the hands of AG Real Estate.

Uncertain timing

The detailed plans for the constructions have not yet been formulated, but these are due to be laid out during the spring of this year. An architectural competition had been organised and the winning firm was revealed in September 2010. The choice of the jury – headed by Antwerp city

Master Architect Kristiaan Boret – was Dutch-based bureau KCAP Architects&Planners together with advisors Arup and Fakton. The City will be looking at the various administrative procedures to be followed, including the possible adaptation of its PRAS, or regional ground use plan. Permit requests will need to be formulated and granted, and even after works actually start – which could still be some years away, the total construction phase is still likely to take up to a decade.

Asked about how the project is now set to progress from his point of view, Kees Christiaanse, partner of KCAP, said: "I expect there to be a concept presented by us in the next six months. In parallel with this, we will be setting up a management process to enable us to work with the various people involved. We are currently looking at the quality which exists within the area, and discussing the various programmes and how they fit together, and whether any additional programmes may be desirable. We are in particular looking very closely at the relationship between the park and the real estate and how we can improve it. We are also considering access to the site, the role of the tram and the metro, and we will be working very intensively on how car parking on the site will be organised. This is a very major project because so many different types of infrastructure and real estate have to be taken into account, including how Neo interacts with the city of Brussels itself".

Tim HARRUP ■



Kees Christiaanse

KCAP

Amongst other major projects which are the hallmark of KCAP are to be found some exceptional examples :

- Hafencity Hamburg, Germany (165 ha.)
- London Olympic Games post-games site redevelopment (UK) (170 ha.)
- Stadionpark Rotterdam, Netherlands (210 ha.)
- Eindhoven Airport, Java Island, Red Apple, Netherlands

Neo in figures

3,500 seat conference centre
100,000 m² shopping centre
10,000 seater show hall
Leisure and sports centre
Residential accommodation