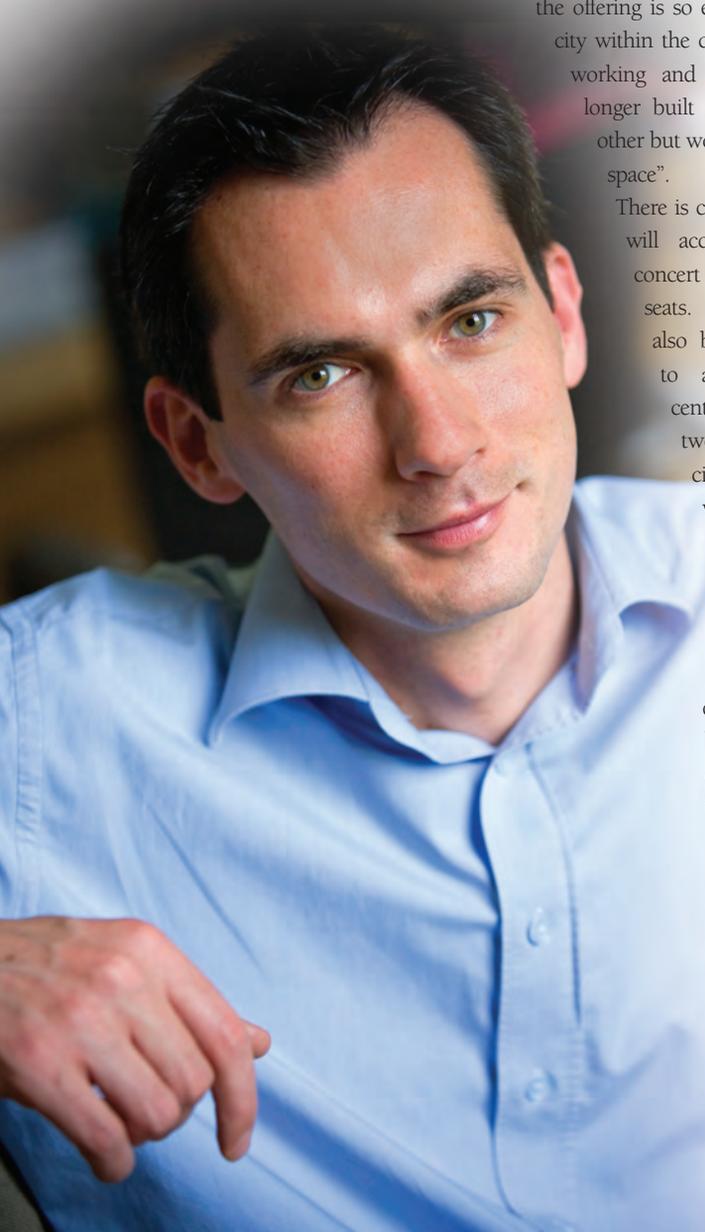


# Uplace, green light for 19

**Uplace Machelen is an ambitious project next to the Vilvoorde viaduct, on the brown-field site of the former Renault factory, in the long neglected canal zone of Machelen. The project, which combines shopping, work, entertainment and public space, has finally been given the green light following a laborious planning process. The project developer and the government are committed to completing all sub-projects by mid- 2015.**

Lorin Parys, Chief Operating Officer at Uplace property group



Uplace Machelen promises to be anything but a traditional shopping centre, even if shopping is one of the core attractions of the whole project. “Everything revolves around the experience” emphasises Lorin Parys, Chief Operating Officer of Uplace, an international lifestyle property group. “We are creating a one-stop destination experience where working, shopping and relaxing blend together seamlessly. It will be a unique feature in Belgium, even abroad, because the mix of the offering is so exceptional. It will be a city within the city, in which shopping, working and entertainment are no longer built in isolation from each other but woven together in a single space”.

There is certainly variety. The site will accommodate a theatre/concert hall with over 3,000 seats. A 180-room hotel is also being built, connecting to a spa and wellness centre, which will feature two swimming pools. A cinema with eight screens will further enrich the entertainment offering, as well as a ‘family zone’ about which little information has been communicated to date but with ‘Legoland’ being cited as an example.

The ‘working’ district consists of an office block with 18,000m<sup>2</sup> of usable space, which will jut out above the Vilvoorde viaduct. There will be 4 further smaller office buildings: 2 in Woluwelaan and 2 in Nieuwbrugstraat.

## Accessibility

Easy access to the site is essential. “We have been able to come to good agreements with all parties – including the Flemish Government, De Lijn and the local authorities in Machelen” assures Lorin Parys. “These relate to both multimodal access and to a commitment to complete the infrastructure and transport work alongside project construction”. An entrance/exit is planned from the ring road and the plan is to incorporate no less than 6,000 parking spaces on the site.

## Attraction

Uplace is acting as project developer, but will also be responsible for the rental. “We have already received letters of interest for 160% of the available space in the retail and leisure zones” reports Lorin Parys with justifiable pride. “And there is also strong interest in the offices despite the high level of empty office space on the Brussels periphery. These are often at B and C quality levels, while we can point to strong advantages such as exemplary eco-performance, excellent access, ample parking facilities that are no longer being approved elsewhere and visibility over the viaduct”. Lorin Parys notes that a lot of interest in the offices comes from large groups, for whom Uplace fits in perfectly with their strategy in the ‘war for talent’.

**Uplace aims to be a one-stop destination experience where working, shopping and relaxing blend together seamlessly**

Lorin Parys concludes: “All the decisions that need to be made have been made, the budget is a fact and procurement has started”. Everything points to the long neglected canal zone in Machelen soon being resurrected as a forward-looking hotspot.

# 0,000m<sup>2</sup> of experiences



from left to right  
Uplace-shopping-gallery  
Uplace overview



Uplace\_entrance

## Protectionist reactions

Despite the fact that the building permit has been granted by Philippe Muyters, the Flemish planning minister, the Uplace mega-project still has the protectionists reaching for their armour. At the beginning of February Groen, the Flemish ecology party, launched an on-line petition 'Uplace is not my place' in opposition to the project, arguing that the projected eight million visitors per year would generate even more traffic congestion. The communes neighbouring Machelen have concerns not just in terms of mobility but particularly for the independent shops of the region for which Uplace represents a threat. These are the reasons why the communes of Vilvorde, Louvain and Grimbergen have appealed to the Council of State. The Brussels Region, which may also feel the effects of the project, and which is also behind the competing Neo project on the Heyzel plateau, had, through its Minister-President Charles Picqué, refused to contest this project in November, in order not to transform a planning/development problem into a communal dispute. In a latest twist, there are fears that the 94 m high tower could interface with aircraft radar at nearby Brussels Airport. The Flemish government is set to give its decision in mid-March on the environmental permit for Uplace.

## Uplace in figures

<b>Developer</b>	Uplace
<b>Architects</b>	Jaspers - Eyers Architects
<b>Building permit</b>	28/10/2011
<b>Start of construction</b>	2013
<b>End date</b>	mid-2015
<b>Total area</b>	190,000m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Parking capacity</b>	6,000 spaces
<b>Public transport</b>	train, tram and bus
<b>For more information</b>	<a href="http://www.uplace.eu">www.uplace.eu</a>