



Some provisional facts and figures

	Location	Total surface area (all functions)	Retail	Developer
Neo	Heysel plateau	68 hectares	72,000 m ²	Brussels Region
Uplace	Machelen	190,000 m ²	82,000 m ²	Uplace
Just Under the Sky	Brussels North	35,600 m ²	35,600 m ²	Equilis

The 'Just under the sky' shopping center project is located alongside the canal to the north west of Brussels centre, near the Van Praet bridge. Developed on the 4 hectare former industrial site of Godin factory, it is part of the entire 'Canalside' redevelopment project. Up to 60,000 m² of retail space is scheduled by developer Equilis along with 1,650 parking spaces.

NEO, UPLACE, JUST UNDER THE SKY

COMPETING FOR SHOPPERS

The landscape where the proposed new shopping centres to the north of Brussels are concerned is not getting any less complicated. A debate has been raging for months (years?) as to whether the Neo mega-project on the Heysel plateau or Uplace in nearby Machelen should be preferred, or whether there is room for both, neither or even something else... And even the smaller-sized Just under the Sky shopping centre has not been free of controversy.

■ Tim HARRUP

Neo and Uplace are fiercely defended by their developers, and there has recently been some evolution in both. Uplace, which appeared to be closer to becoming a reality, has recently had its environmental permit suspended by the Council of State. Without going into too many details, the Council of State believes that the granting of the environmental permit by the Flemish government last year was premature, and that many assurances concerning the transport infrastructure remain to be answered first. Alongside this, a process seeking to permanently cancel the environmental permit for Uplace is still underway. The planned opening date for Uplace had been September 2016, but with works unable to start until these legal questions are resolved, it may be expected that this date will have to be put back.

Neo

Close by at Neo, however, following very long months when nothing at all appeared to be happening, the Brussels Region and City have now designated the three candidates for the construction of this multi-purpose complex. They are Unibail-Rodamco/CFE/Besix, Hammerson/Soficom/Codic and Klépierre/AG Real Estate/Wereldhave. The dialogue process is set to take another year or more, following which the

winning candidate will be named. The Brussels-Capital Region has set a demanding objective for this project, whose overall master-plan has been drawn up by Netherlands-based bureau KCAP. It has to combine its anchorage in a historical urban fabric with at the same time becoming a shining example of urban planning conception. One of the specific factors within the context of Neo, which will affect the shopping centre as much as the other functions, is that it is a private initiative subject to directional guidance from a public authority.

Just under the Sky

The third participant in the competition to relieve consumers in the north of the capital of their money is 'Just under the Sky'. This development by Equilis is the only one within the urban area of Brussels. It is located close to the rapidly developing canal on the edge of the city near Laeken. Its 35,600 m² are all devoted to shopping and leisure, a contrast with the other two sites which both include offices and housing. This project has recently received the go-ahead for its socio-economic permit, having also been embroiled in a debate as to its usefulness/necessity. Works may be able to start in the early part of this year.

It is widely agreed that Brussels is lacking in shopping centre space when compared to other major cities, and this is partially due to the



Neo - Phase 1

The public call for tenders of June 2012 in order to find private partners involves phase one of Neo. This is for the construction of the 72,000 m² shopping centre with a further 9,000 m² of café and restaurant facilities, along with 500 to 575 residential units also set to be built. These units represent the second largest element of phase one of the project. In order to optimise the tourist attraction, already a very important feature of the Heysel plateau, candidates for its development have been invited to propose an extra leisure concept with a tourist vocation (15,000 m² indoors and 30,000 m² outdoors). The master plan also schedules a certain number of offices in order to facilitate the operation of the other functions within the site. This first phase also includes the creation of 3,700 underground parking spaces which should enable most above-ground parking to be eliminated and the quality and aesthetics of the public areas to be improved.

strong desire to retain the traditional city centre high street shops. It is this desire, defended by certain organisations such as Unizo, which has led to the long-running sagas surrounding these three developments. 'Just under the Sky' is likely to win the race in terms of timing, but the evolution of the other two is set to drag on for quite a lot longer yet.