

—LEUVEN (BELGIUM)—

From a grey industrial zone to AN OUTSTANDING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

The Tweewaters project—a large, new and pioneering urban neighbourhood on the former site of the Stella Artois breweries in Leuven (Belgium)—started to take shape as of 2008-2009. Jo Vandeborgh pushed his company Ertzberg towards a sustainable neighbourhood early on, long before others even dared to contemplate this option. The new urban neighbourhood covers a surface area of 11 hectares, and thanks to the 1,200 new dwellings, 5,000 new inhabitants will be able to live and work in Leuven. Seventy percent of this neighbourhood will consist of public, accessible green space. The whole neighbourhood will be almost car-free. In terms of energy, Tweewaters is a European demonstration project. For example, the neighbourhood produces more green energy and heat than it actually needs. Soon a viable, green and ecologically sustainable neighbourhood will arise on the former industrial site of one of the world's biggest breweries, only twenty minutes from Brussels. An inspiring example for Europe and the world.

The formerly lifeless and depressing neighbourhood has already largely paved the way for Tweewaters. The “Balk van Beel” (Beel’s beam)–Stéphane Beel is Flanders’ leading architect with an international reputation–has already been built. An innovative car park for 250 cars was recently built. The plans for a visually striking apartment building–the Twist–are being designed onsite. And Q –a residential complex with assisted living facilities–has been designed and is ready to be built on the banks of the River Dyle.

The rather desolate urban section of the brewery is being transformed into futuristic buildings, founded on a vision. Tweewaters is all about “living in the future” in today’s biggest contemporary city centre project in Belgium. And Europe perhaps? Jo Vandeborgh formulated the sustainable vision–offering “urban convenience” or “time and a care-free existence to everyone and being able to guarantee this to the following generations”–which underpins this integrated project. With Tweewaters, the Ertzberg development firm wants to show that sustainability and comfort go hand in hand.

New way of life

The urban development firm offers a “new way of life” to the inhabitants and people who experienced and believed in the new neighbourhood, with certain living patterns that are strikingly “different” from what we accustomed to: smart meters, one-key access, a very high level of acoustic comfort, fibre optic cables and home delivery lockers. The latter especially are inventive and innovative. *People living in Tweewaters can have goods delivered to their home or picked up from their home, even when nobody is home. This promotes sustainability and comfort because, whereas all the inhabitants drive to the shops individually in traditional neighbourhoods, transportation is much more efficient in Tweewaters thanks to these lockers and the smart logistics associated with it. One delivery for the entire neighbourhood and, thanks to the smart link*



between the supplier and customer, the delivery is always made, even when nobody is home.

The ambitious project is an eye-catcher in many ways, but the sustainability aspect is probably the most striking. Tweewaters is ground-breaking among others in terms of energy, mobility, waste management, the built-up surface area and consumption and services. All the aspects that are so closely connected in our society are tackled in this urban neighbourhood. The approach is holistic. All the aspects have an environmental impact, which is why they all influence the reduction of the neighbourhood’s ecological footprint: compact buildings, a reduction of the energy demand, maximum waste sorting, a decentralised energy generation, etc. Tweewaters will be a CO₂-negative neighbourhood. Where possible, the complete lifecycle analysis is taken into account for the selection of the materials.

World-class

Tweewaters ties in closely with the existing urban fabric, but at the same time, it marks a break with the traditional streets and squares of the city centre. Tweewaters offers a lot of public space, but in a different urban development pattern. In terms of energy alone, Tweewaters is a world-class project. There is no other, similar project that is founded on the same holistic approach.

Architecturally speaking, Tweewaters also has several gems that will put Leuven on the world map. The silos of the former Stella Artois site are certain to be a striking icon. The brick superstructure and front part of the 54 cylinders will be removed to make them look even more remarkable. The round façade openings will allow for the necessary daylight. A new superstructure will protrude by 18

metres and will redesign the neighbourhood’s skyline. Just under the superstructure–50 metres from street level–there will be an exceptional public square, the *city balcony*, with a spectacular view of the city.

Prices

The first building to be built in Tweewaters was the “Balk van Beel”. The ambitions for this building were quite high. The combination of high-level, contemporary architecture, increased comfort of living, and exceptionally solid sustainability principles, initially did not even appeal to the financiers. That is why Ertzberg built the “Balk van Beel” with its own resources, without compromising in terms of sustainability. And so the “Balk van Beel” was built, in compliance with the highest standards in terms of welfare and health, ecological impact, quality of life, energy, ecology, materials used, waste management, innovation, etc. It earned the “outstanding” Breeam certification, and is considered to be the most sustainable building in its category on the continent. Which is why Ertzberg was invited to London to accept the 2013 Breeam International Award. Moreover, Ertzberg also received the Sustainable Partnerships Award this year for its innovative and socially committed collaboration with the organisations in the neighbourhood.

After the “Balk van Beel”, the next buildings to be built are the Twist and Q. The silos and the rest of the neighbourhood will then follow. All the buildings and the entire neighbourhood will comply with the highest sustainability requirements. Or how Tweewaters is going in search of recognition as the first “outstanding sustainable community”.