HD54 2016 - 2018

Heavy refurbishment of an office building on the avenue Hermann-Debroux in Auderghem



Site
Avenue Hermann-Debroux 54 1160 Auderghem

Client
AXA investment managers - AXA Belgium

Structural engineer
Pirnay engineering

Services engineer
DÃ©tang engineering

Budget
EUR htva

BREEAM
B4F

Entering Brussels from the east, the ForÃªt de Soignes abrubtly ends on your right giving rise to a non-descript string of questionable 1980's po-mo feats. HD54 in the forefront opens the dance. But however dissuasive these sculptural antics, the main issue is that such obsolete relics constitute Brussels' greatest contribution to GHG. Tear it all down ? but HD54's existing structure is sound, and volumes surprisingly promising.

After complete audit of the structure, decision is taken to skirt demolition/newBuild preferring instead heavy refurb : stripping off the present lackluster brick skin, streaming down overbearing volumes thus generating a succesion of convivial terraces north-east overlooking the forest, shifting sqm's towards the overpass south thus marking the prow, and finally wrapping up the upgraded forms with an air-tight pre-fab timber skin clad in delicate glass mosaÃ¯c. Down at ground level unbuilt space is devoted to fluid circulation paths and user-friendly rest-stops, framed by flowing indigenous planting taking its cue from the dense greenery across the street. The BREEAM certified ensemble tickles excellent, and offers exemplary energy-efficiency.

Work here thus focuses on two critical axes: urban integration through the creation of qualified relationships with the existing context, and environmental excellence. There are no â€˜high-fives', no long rigmarole, but rather a calm restraint giving rise to the pertinence of an apt response, in turn generating demonstrable economic viability, sole guarantee of the approach's reproducibility. Regional authorities have welcomed the project within what is known as the Delta perimeter, one of the 10 priority intervention sites specifically targeted in Brussels, these which are â€œdeserving of a particular effort in order to hasten progress for the short and medium termsâ€•.

But HD54 pushes environmental concerns further by integrating even at this large scale circular processes along with collaborative work-modes. Indeed, most of the existing double-pane glass gets a second life as a bucolic country greenhouse in Brussels' outskirts. Those 80's revival earth-coloured bricks are crushed to reappear as dry brick walls organizing landscaping on site and more importantly creating a welcoming haven for local flora and fauna. And existing partitions/furniture/lighting fixtures are already re-incarnated as as trendy fit-outs at Brussels' recently inaugurated Recyk-Ecopole alongside the canal, with leftover loot preciously stocked for future use ... for example at Greenbizz's upcoming FabLab.

These additional efforts resulting from the shared desire to integrate circular economy to the project was fully embraced by client AXA, architectesassoc+ and all actors involved. Certainly the double glazing re-purposed for the greenhouse constitutes the most salient example of the perks of this approach, one defended with commitment by both the studio who traditionnally directs its work purposefully [Â« it's the doing that counts Â»] and Stefaan Kampelmann from the OSMOS group with whom the greenhouse project is developed [http://osmosnetwork.com/light-farm/].