



## Concessions & Assets

# NEW HEADQUARTERS FOR THE LOCAL ANTWERP POLICE FORCE

AS 2017 WAS COMING TO AN END, THE BESIX TEAM FINALISING POST X (SIX PASSIVE OFFICE BUILDINGS) LEARNED THEY WOULD BE STAYING ON SITE A LITTLE WHILE LONGER. AG VESPA, ANTWERP'S INDEPENDENT MUNICIPAL COMPANY RESPONSIBLE FOR REAL ESTATE AND URBAN PROJECTS, AWARDED THE PPP PROJECT TO DESIGN, BUILD, FINANCE, MAINTAIN AND OPERATE A NEW HOME FOR THE OPERATIONAL AND SUPPORTING SERVICES OF THE LOCAL POLICE FORCE TO A CONSORTIUM IN WHICH BESIX WOULD ACT AS CONTRACTOR. THE HISTORIC LOCATION OF THE ANTWERP POSTAL SORTING CENTRE, SITUATED ON THE CORNER OF THE BORSBEEKSEBRUG AND THE INTERIOR SINGEL, IS THE IDEAL BASE CAMP, BOASTING GREAT ACCESSIBILITY WHILE STILL CLOSE TO THE CITY CENTRE.

### FROM A CONTRACTING ROLE TO A FULL PPP RESPONSIBILITY

Originally the building would have been delivered in the spring of 2020, were it not for a full year delay during which the works on-site were halted. Profound issues between the many parties involved in the project (i.e. prospective client, developer, contractor and financiers) lead to a full restructuring of all key contractual agreements, which was reached in July 2020. BESIX took over 100% of the shares in the project company from the prior owner, turning what was 'just' a Build-contract into the biggest PPP-building project ever in its portfolio of concessions. After signing an amended DBFM agreement with the City of Antwerp, a rescheduling of the EPC contract and the reaching of a new financial close for long-term debt funding to the project with three of the major Belgian banks, construction works could finally resume on the site of the Local Police Tower Antwerp in October 2020.

### NOT YOUR AVERAGE OFFICE BUILDING

"Building new police headquarters is more than just piling up office floors", explains Pieter De Wachter, Site Superintendent at BESIX. "The building consists of 14 layers: four below ground and from the third floor up, the building will have two towers, one on the side of the interior Singel and one on the side of the Antwerp ring road, both reaching up to 10 floors." While the Singel tower was fairly straight-forward, the design called for an indoor and outdoor gym hall in the Ring tower as well as a shooting range. With the ever-busy, 10-lane wide Antwerp Ring Road rushing right past this part of the building, all materials were chosen with acoustical values as a top priority. The space created between the two towers on the third floor, the atrium, will be the food court. "It's an impressive space with plenty of daylight, as it is covered in glass roofing with steel beams crossing the entire length", clarifies Pieter. "The building also contains a number of short term holding cells, of which the location remains top secret!"

### LARGE WORKFORCE ON A TIGHT SCHEDULE

"The biggest challenge is undoubtedly to make sure all subcontractors adhere to the tight planning. On the busiest moments, up to 500 pairs of skilled hands are at work on site", explains Ellen De Groof, Assistant Site Superintendent on the project. "To navigate this task, we've decided to implement a LEAN planning. All project and site managers gather once a week with their subcontractor counterparts during a LEAN meeting to discuss the planning. It allows us to avoid possible clashes and to spot potential planning opportunities. In addition, we hold what is called a 'daily stand' with foremen and overseers. On the wall of our meeting room, we put up pictures of issues we spot on site, such as safety, quality, any possible infractions to our Life-Saving Rules, etc. It ensures an open discussion. After these 20 minutes, everyone who leaves the room is aware of the short-term planning, while site management knows exactly what's going on in every corner of the site. These team moments instil a common goal for all parties involved, boosting motivation and commitment across the board."

### A YOUNG AND DYNAMIC PROJECT TEAM

The project and its planning are demanding, but Project Manager Koen Van Lerberghe is confident they can pull it off. "One of the advantages of working for BESIX is the independence and opportunities we are permitted to give to our young professionals. Our youngest Site Superintendent is only 24. It adds a powerful dynamic to the team, which can only help the progress of the project." LEAN is also a potent training tool for these young professionals. "We communicate openly about every aspect of the project, without holding back any secrets about difficulties or challenges. It helps them to become well-rounded site professionals aware of every detail which can make or break a project. Personally, I firmly believe in this human approach."



LOCAL POLICE TOWER, ANTWERP, BELGIUM

### Project details

## LOCAL POLICE ANTWERP TOWER

**Location**  
Antwerp, Belgium

**Client**  
AG Vespa

**Contract type**  
PPP

**Stakeholders**  
BESIX, AG Vespa, City of Antwerp, Local Police Force Antwerp

**Construction period**  
2018 – 2022



PIETER DE WACHTER, ELLEN DE GROOF AND KOEN VAN LERBERGHE