

LA LOUVIERE. The productive city. E 15



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Glossary

The abbreviations below refer to urban planning tools developed at municipal level. They are utilised in municipal urban planning to produce the development proposals chosen by the municipal elected representatives and to guide the project designers, developers and project owners concerning territorial development in La Louvière.

MUDZ: Municipal Urban Development Zones. This is an area not defined in the area plan, a regional planning tool. The MUDZ are development reserves for municipalities. The MUDZ located opposite the site considered is MUDZ No. 21, “Chemin des Diables”.

UPER: Urban Planning and Environmental Report. A report conducted prior to other work, it enables implementation of an MUDZ. The UPER related to MUDZ No. 21 was updated using another planning tool called the LPF.

LPF: Local Policy Framework, currently under consideration for implementation of MUDZ No. 21.

MMP: Municipal Mobility Plan. The most recent version of the MMP was approved in March 2018.

Furthermore, the **area plan** is a regional tool that lists the different land use designations (housing, industry, community facilities area, agriculture, etc.)

Key:



= location of the site considered on all the maps in this briefing document.

1. Site issues



Photo 1: aerial photo, on which the site considered and the project site are displayed.

The European project site (framed in yellow) has an area of approximately 3.5 hectares and is primarily made up of 3 areas, which are currently not built-up and which can be found within a fabric of mainly social housing.

Two of these zones are currently occupied by green spaces; the third is a linear section occupied by greenery that provides a physical and visual break with the rest of the built-up elements.

To date, no other uses apart from housing are present on the site considered (framed in red), except for two schools and a community centre.

The city has a threefold development strategy for this site:

1. **To make the neighbourhood accessible** by opening it up and connecting it to its immediate environment via soft mobility connections with the city centre and multi-modal hubs, as well as via links with existing and future urban zones adjacent to the neighbourhood.
2. **To create housing** consistent with the diagnostic conducted (in terms of household sizes and structures, population age, etc.).
3. **To boost employment** by creating zones within the neighbourhood conducive to the development of very small, small and medium sized businesses.

The expected interventions on the site should enable the transformation of this mono-functional neighbourhood into a productive district, which could be achieved via 3 focuses of work:

- Installation of a multi-purpose building.
- Creation of a productive street running through the neighbourhood.
- In a later phase, the filling of the unoccupied (non-urbanised) areas within the neighbourhood through production activities or micro-farming.

2. Site particularities regarding the organization of the competition

SITE REPRESENTATIVE: CENTR'HABITAT
Sergio Spoto, director and deputy manager
ACTOR(S) INVOLVED: CENTR'HABITAT
Public housing company

TEAM REPRESENTATIVE:
Architect
EXPECTED SKILLS REGARDING THE SITE'S ISSUES AND CHARACTERISTICS:
Architect, engineer, urban planner and/or landscape gardener

COMMUNICATION:
Communication after the competition
Press, exhibition of national results, date(s) and time(s) to be specified

JURY – 1 ST EVALUATION:
With the participation of the site representatives

POST-COMPETITION INTERMEDIATE PROCEDURE DEPENDING ON PROJECT RELEVANCE:
Presentation of the rewarded teams to the site representative(s), followed by a discussion.
Direct selection of one winning team for an implementation process.
Workshop on-site with the rewarded teams - winner(s), runner(s)-up, special mention(s) - allowing the site representative(s) to choose a team for the implementation phase.
In the case where site falls under public market regulations, organisation of a 2 nd step as a contractual study and/or workshop, involving the rewarded teams to further develop their projects and approaches to changes in various site data and to allow the site representative(s) to choose one or more team(s) for the implementation phase.

3. Territorial context (at city level)

3.1 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The territory of Hainaut (which later became the Belgian province of Hainaut), to which La Louvière belongs, has always been home to fertile farming land, independently of industrialisation.

In the beginning, La Louvière was merely a hamlet of Saint-Vaast.

Rise

Coal, present everywhere in the region since time immemorial and the mining of which developed greatly in the 18th century, was merely one factor among many that explains the lightning development of La Louvière: the large population, waterways (notably the construction in 1839 of the junction with the “Brussels-Charleroi canal”), roads and railways (the creation of the Mons-Manage line soon saw the construction of the first station in La Louvière in 1851) and, especially, creation of the Boch pottery works in 1844.



Photo 2: miners 1906

A plentiful workforce and an efficient network of different transport means attracted many industries and particularly the Boch pottery works, a major employer and the region's industrial flagship (which went bankrupt in 2012).

Steel-making and metal-works became part of the industrial landscape from 1853, witnessing the construction of the first blast furnaces and the founding, in 1887, of the Boël steel-works.

The major activity generated by these industries, at intensity rarely rivalled elsewhere, indeed led to a significant population increase and witnessed the development of existing villages, giving rise to the town of La Louvière: many schools and houses were built, administrations established and banks were opened,

without forgetting the social and political development of the working community.

It was only belatedly that, in 1869, the municipality of La Louvière was officially founded. In 1985, it acquired the status of city.

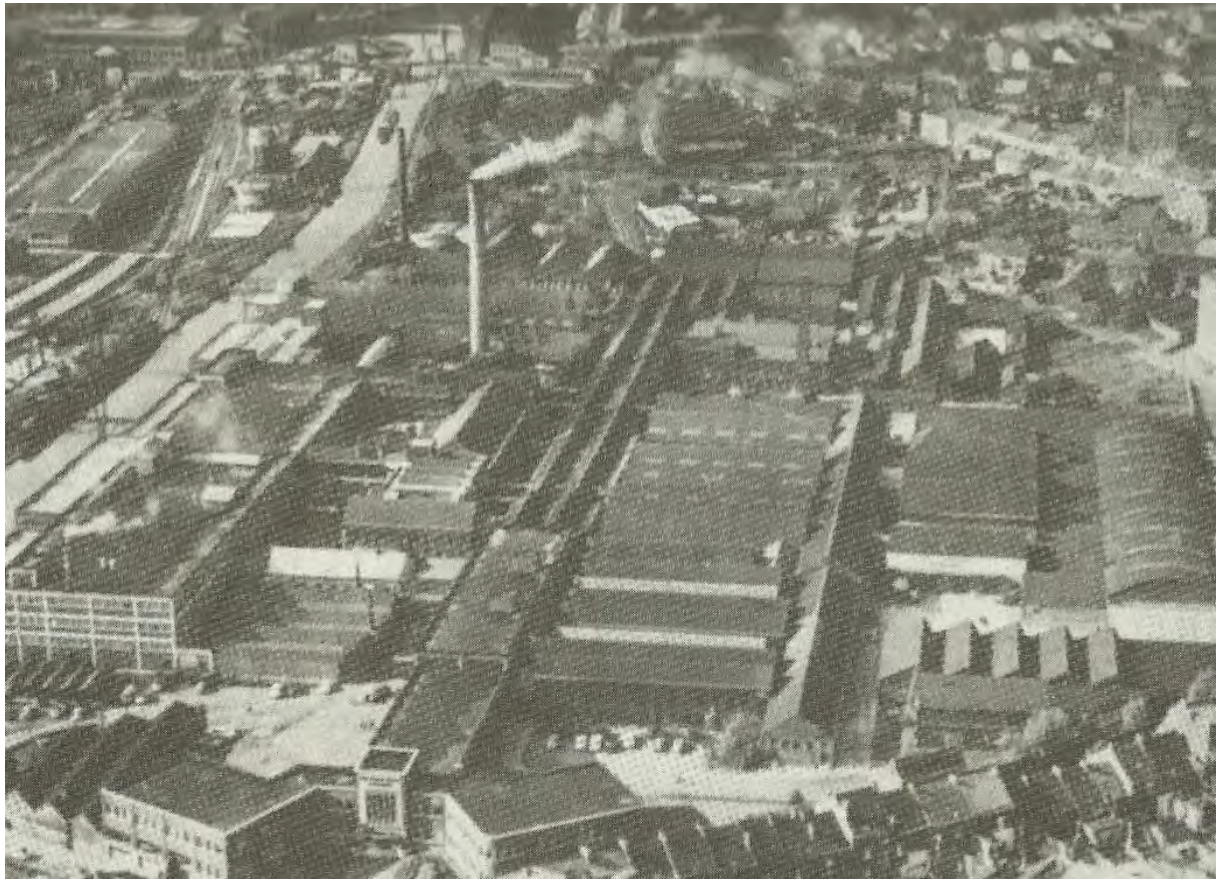


Photo 3: the Boch Frères pottery works circa 1950

Decline

It was particularly in the wake of the Second World War that closure of coal mines occurred. In 1945, the "battle for coal" led to intensified coal production to power re-building of the country after the war. However, from 1950, economic crisis took hold, due to outmoded coal mines, rising production costs and the Marcinelle disaster in 1956, whereas since 1946, thousands of Italian workers had emigrated to Wallonia and Limburg. This led to the loss of jobs for 30,000 people.

Furthermore, the creation of the Common Market in 1956 increased the competition between coal mining sites, notably with the more modern German operations. During the 1960's, closures and strikes increased. Production of coal ceased definitively between 1960 and 1970.

The other major industries that contributed to the wealth of Belgium's Centre Region closed one after another.

The economic conversion of La Louvière proved to be a major challenge, made particularly difficult by the magnitude of the task in terms of land use planning, especially with regard to the implementation of major work to sanitise the industrial landscape and to carry out urban restructuring (dismantling and demolition of industrial facilities and obsolete transport infrastructures, etc.).

Little by little, La Louvière developed into a tertiary town, where services developed and a large array of schools were opened. See § 3.3.2 *Employment opportunities and business sectors*.

Merger of municipalities

The entity of La Louvière came into being in 1976-77 following the merger of 11 municipalities, including **Saint-Vaast**, where the site considered and project site are located.



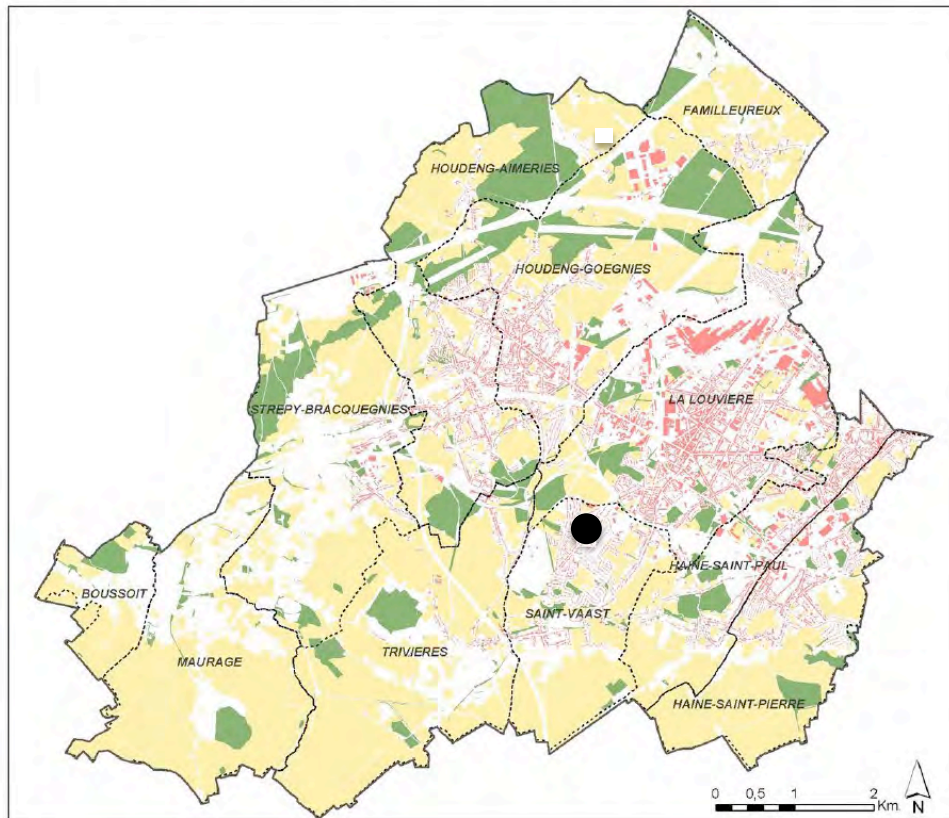
Map 4: the 11 municipalities of La Louvière

3.2 LA LOUVIÈRE: CAPITAL OF THE CENTRE REGION

The Centre Region was created in 1832, with the aim of inter-linking twelve municipalities spread over the coal-mining districts of Borinage and greater Charleroi. Its location at the hub of many transport routes make the area especially accessible and the green landscapes through which the waterways flow, encouraging the development of leisure activities, are its main assets. The capital of this region is recognised as being La Louvière.

Today, it has been considerably urbanised. The urban nuclei of the main former municipalities have extended to the point where they have blended. Consequently, the urbanisation is almost continuous between the centres of Strépy-Bracquegnies, Houdeng-Ameries, Houdeng-Goegnies, La Louvière centre and Haine-Saint-Paul, Haine-Saint-Pierre and Saint-Vaast.

Apart from the far northern tip which has not witnessed spectacular development, the entire territory around La Louvière bears the traces of its industrial past. In spite of this, La Louvière still possesses a significant amount of agricultural zones in large strips to the north and especially to the south of the territory. The structural plan notes however that these agricultural zones are tending to be eroded by housing and broken up by transport infrastructures.



Map & text 5, in the frames above: extract from the UPER conducted by JNC for the City of La Louvière within the scope of implementation of MUDZ No. 21, located opposite the site considered.

3.3 ECONOMIC SITUATION

Sources: all the statistics in this chapter come from the “Cap Ruralité” web site, an analysis and prospection think tank specialised in rural issues.

3.3.1 RATE OF UNEMPLOYMENT

The rate of unemployment is on the increase (since 2009: 21.4%), reaching a value of **22.1%** in 2015. It is significantly higher than the average for the area of Soignies (13.25%), to which La Louvière belongs. The neighbouring municipality of Manage has a rate of 19.7%.

3.3.2 EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND BUSINESS SECTORS

Although the city has experienced periods of full employment, most of the major employers have today disappeared. The main large-scale site of economic and industrial activities is located in the north of the city, namely Duferco La Louvière which employs more than 1,400 people.

Following the closure of the coal mines and the various industries that brought wealth to the Centre Region (chiefly steel-making and metal-working), economic conversion is proving to be a major challenge.

For 2015, the **average total taxable net income per capita** was € 14,211; which is lower than all the towns in the Soignies area, to which La Louvière belongs.

The structural plan underlines that there are insufficient employment opportunities to enable the population to find employment in the area. It summarises the employment situation in La Louvière as follows:

- Services activities and independent professions are predominant; public sector losses (in teaching) are offset by private sector companies and private organisations, independent professions, etc.
- Shops represent the second largest business sector; small shopkeepers are becoming an endangered species, but salaried employment is on the rise: a concentration of commercial activity can thus be observed.
- Employment linked to industrial production and craft trades is in marked decline.
- The “energy-construction” sector has gained significant importance, as in the entire Centre Region in general.

The currently active businesses can be broken down as follows in the various business sectors:

- 65.6% in the tertiary sector.
- 33% in secondary industry.
- 1.4 % in primary industry

After many years of decline, since 2004, an increase in the number of active companies in the municipality can be observed (+ 206 over a 4-year period, between 2014 and 2017).

Active companies (2015 figures):

Total number of active companies: 3,483

Total number of business creations: 402

Total number of business closures: 314

The most heavily represented sectors are automobile repairs, construction, HORECA and specialist, scientific and technical activities.

3.3.3 POPULATION & HOUSEHOLDS

Population (2017)	80,719 inhabitants
Area	64.16 km ²
Density	1,258 inhabitants/km ² (12.6 inhab./Ha)

The number of households has risen from 33,432 in 2008 to 34,349 in 2015, i.e. an annual increase of 131 households.

The average size of a private household in 2015 was 2.3 people.

As for the Walloon Region, analysis of demographic change points to an increase in the demand for small and medium-sized housing (due to an increase in the population and numbers of small households). In this regard, La Louvière possesses the profile required to absorb this demand which is primarily focused on urban centres. However, in light of the migratory profile, it is necessary to pay (or continue to pay) attention to the municipality's appeal, particularly by highlighting the array of communal services, urban renewal and enviable conditions of accessibility.

Text 6, in the frame above: extract of the UPER concerning the “Chemin des Diables” MUDZ (Nov. 2011).

3.4 “STRUCTURE” OF THE TERRITORY

The population is widely spread over the entire municipal territory, with a relatively small city centre that is home to less than 30% of the total population.

Saint-Vaast is not among the significant secondary hubs such as Houdeng, Haine-Saint-Paul and Haine-Saint-Pierre. Nonetheless, the site considered is located in the north of Saint-Vaast, near to the city centre.

4. Saint-Vaast & site considered (framed in red)

4.1 SAINT-VAAST

For a long time, agriculture and livestock farming were the main activities in the village of Saint-Vaast. From the 13th century, coal production became the source of its wealth. At the beginning of the 20th century, many coal mines were closed and production ceased definitively between 1960 and 1970.

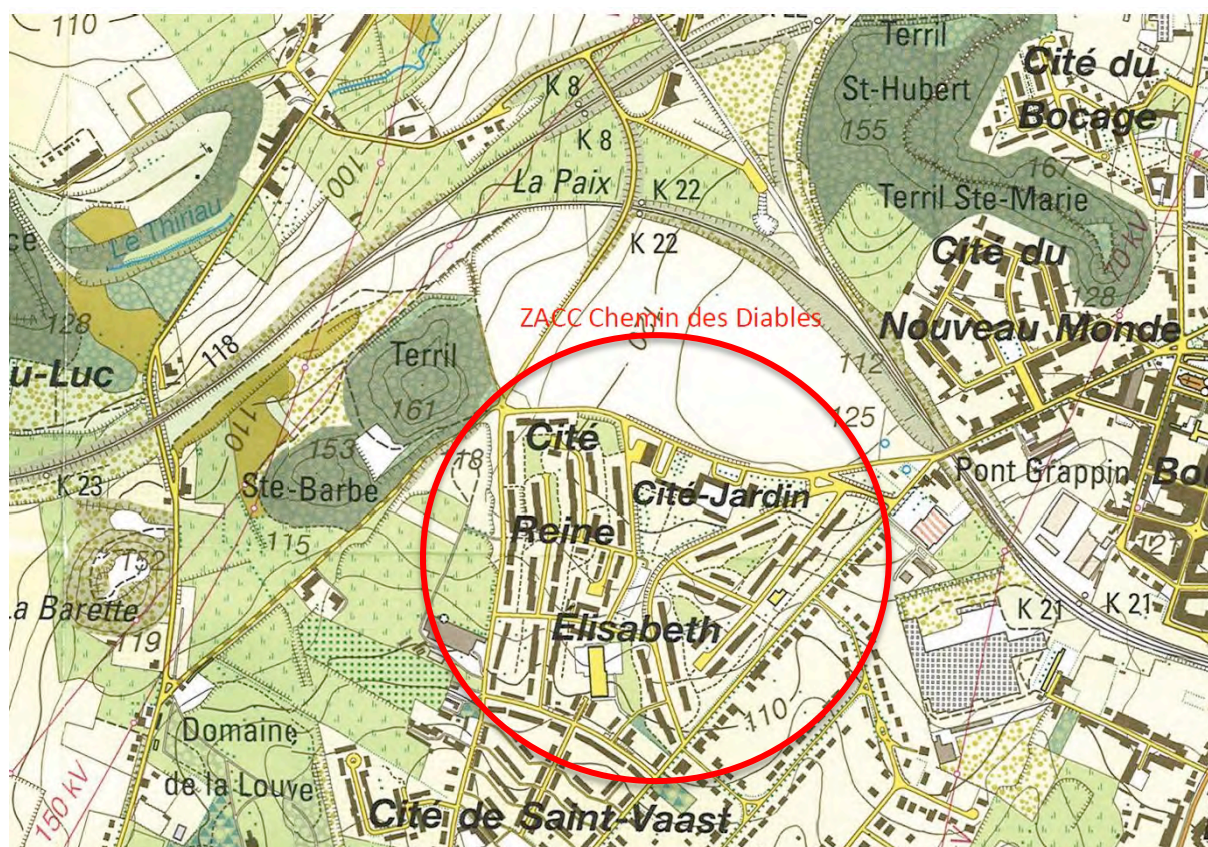
4.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE CONSIDERED

The site considered has an area of approximately 19 hectares. It is made up of almost 500 homes, of which more than 400 are social housing units of different types (houses/apartments), built in several phases between 1958 and 1977.

To date, no other function apart from housing is present on the site, except for two schools (a nursery school and a primary school) and a community centre (see map 6 “Figure 32”, below).



Map 7: map from the Walloon Region cartographic site “cartographic portal”.



The site considered is relatively close to the centre of La Louvière and the railway station (*Gare du Centre*). It is adjacent to a major urban entry and link road, agricultural areas, a Municipal Urban Development Zone (MUDZ) with an area of several hectares, the former “Sainte-Barbe” slagheap, the former Saint-Vaast social housing estate, in which all the housing units have been sold, and developments of single-family homes (see the maps below).

Below is the Sainte-Barbe slagheap, near to the site, completely taken over by vegetation but not accessible to the public. An area of farmland lies in front of it.



According to the plans in the Local Policy Framework (LPF) currently under consideration, the MUDZ located to the north of the site considered will contain housing and community sports facilities.

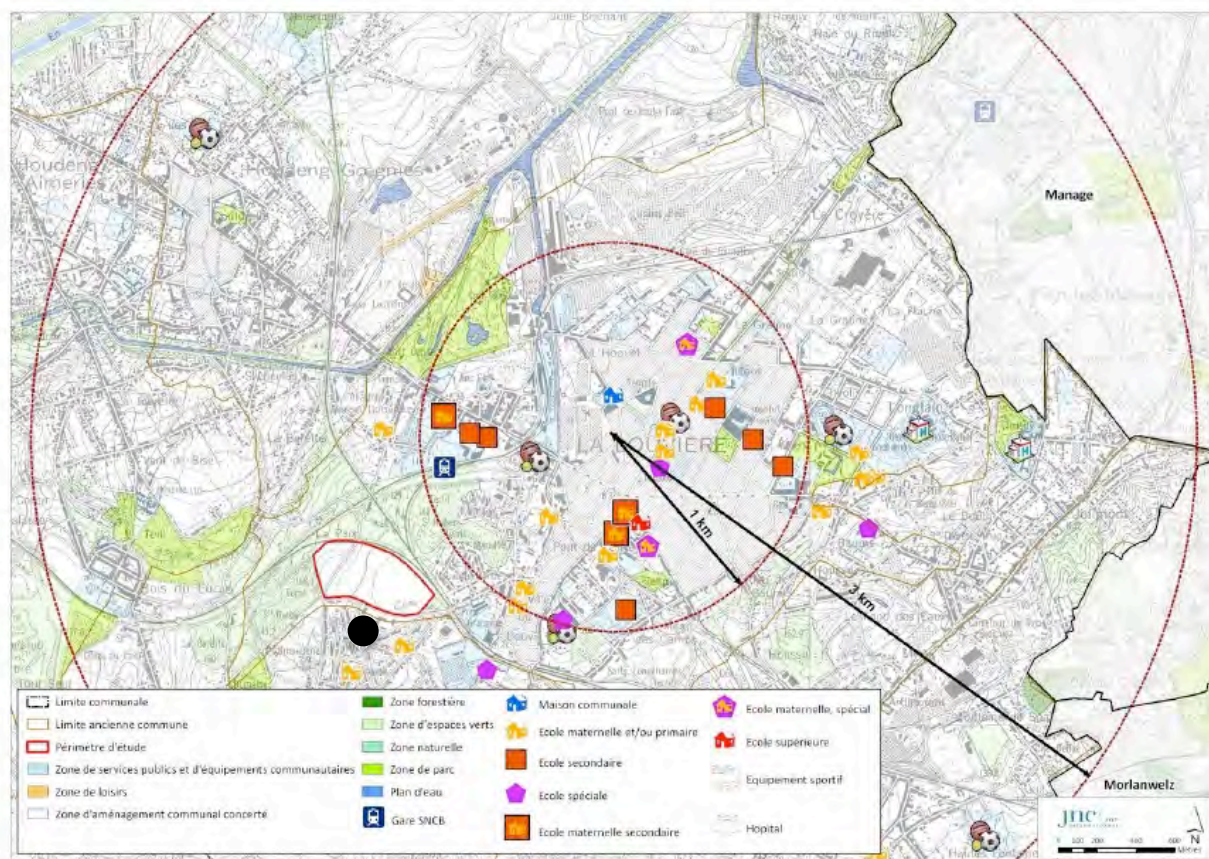


Figure 32: Localisation de l'offre actuelle en terme d'équipements autour du centre de La Louvière (JNC AWP, 2011)

Map 10: figure 32, an extract from the urban planning and environmental report (UPER) for the City of La Louvière concerning the implementation of MUDZ No. 21 "Chemin des Diables", located to the north of the site considered.

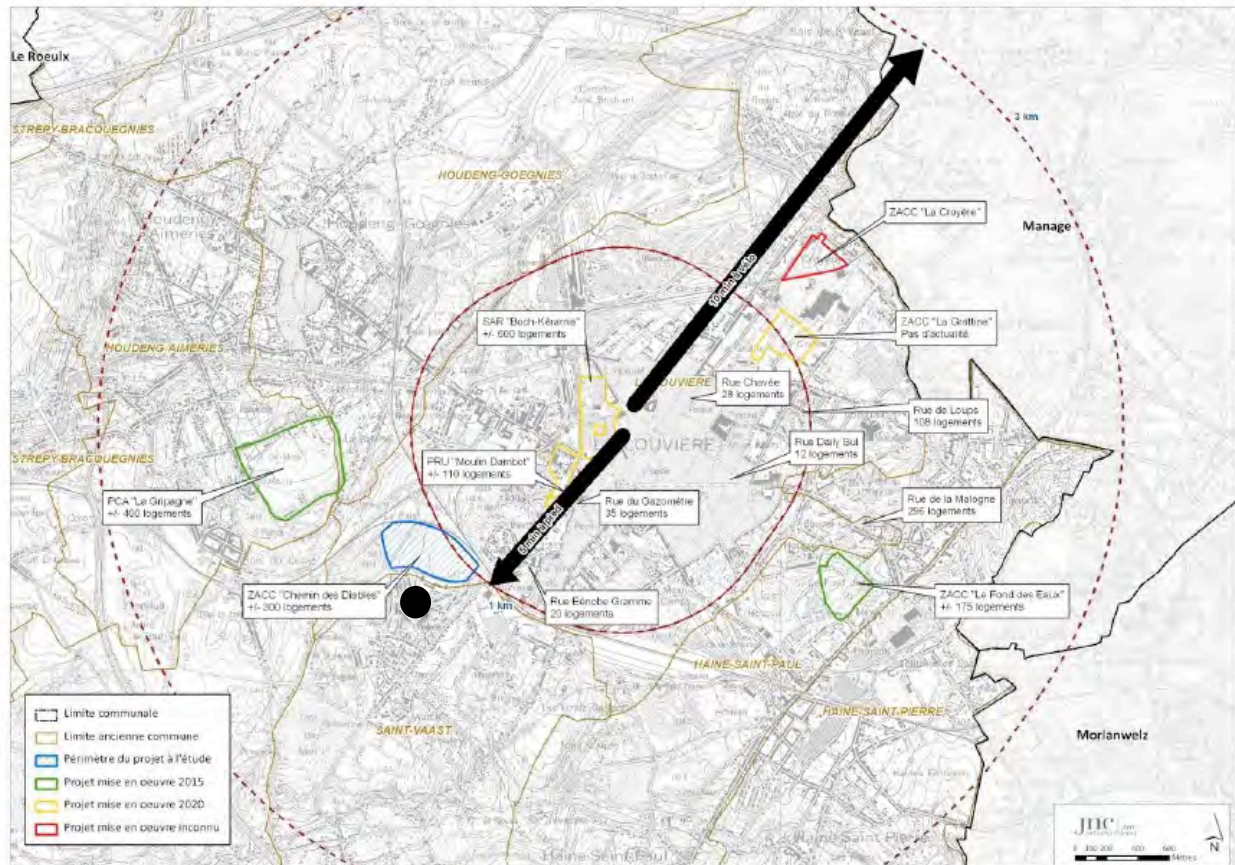
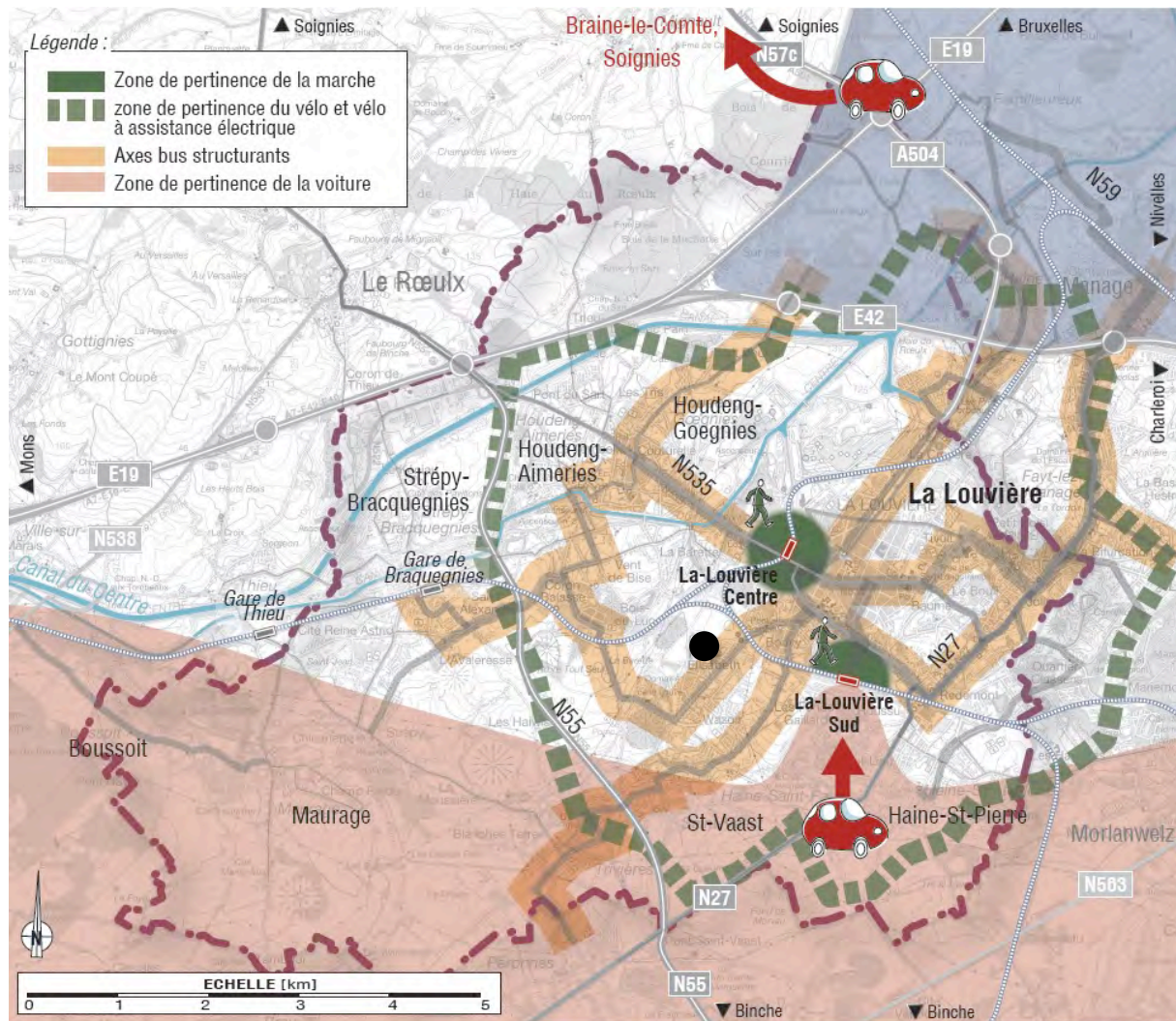


Figure 30: Localisation des différents projets de lotissements d'envergure dans le centre de La Louvière (Source: service urbanisme - Cartographie: JNC AWP, 2011)

Map 11: figure 30, an extract from the urban planning and environmental report (UPER) for the City of La Louvière concerning the implementation of MUDZ No. 21 "Chemin des Diables", located to the north of the site considered, November 2011.

4.3 MOBILITY DATA



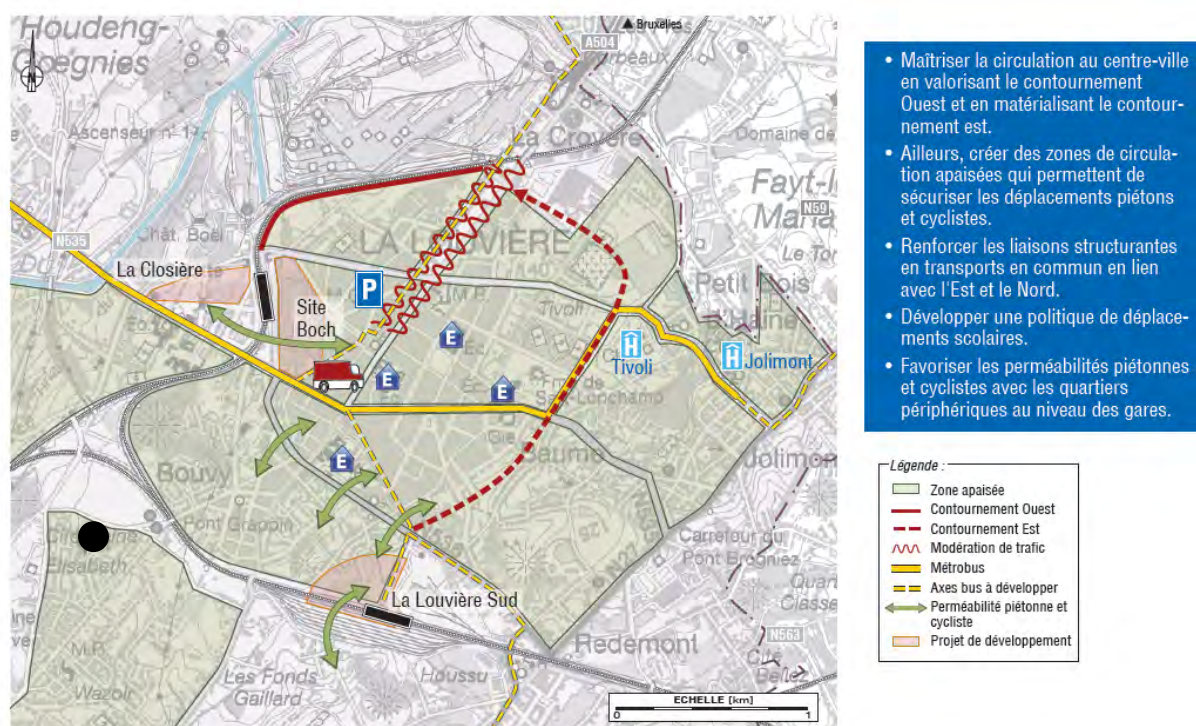
Map 12: access to the “La Louvière Centre” and “La Louvière Sud” railway stations, relevance of different means of travel, an extract from the “update of the La Louvière MMP – Propositions” carried out by Transitec for the City of La Louvière, March 2018.

The most recent version of the Municipal Mobility Plan (MMP) was approved in March 2018. In short, it proposes to focus on 3 vectors: the road network, public transport (buses and railway stations) and pedestrian movements.

The site considered and part of the project site are located alongside a major bus route (along Rue Emile Urbain). The traffic on Rue Emile Urbain is dense.

The MMP proposes to list the site as a “calm zone” (see map 9 below).

As regards soft mobility, no specific measures have been taken, apart from the creation of a cycling & pedestrian route along the Chemin des Diables, a road which runs round the northern part of the site. The City of La Louvière has incorporated it into its soft mobility network as one of the “transversal cycling routes”. This development has yet to be completed.



Map 13: proposals of objectives at city centre level, an extract from the “update of the La Louvière MMP – diagnostic & objectives”, Transitec, March 2018.

4.4 TABLE OF THE SITE'S STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

WEAKNESSES
- Separated from the city by a MUDZ not yet implemented.
- The railway line prevents direct access to the city centre
- The social housing estate is isolated and insular.
- Rue E. Urbain, the major city entry route running alongside the site, is congested during rush hours.
STRENGTHS
- A calm area with many green spaces.
- Convenience shops and services along Rue E. Urbain.
- Located approximately 2 km from the city centre.
- Well served by public transport: one of the main bus routes runs along Rue E. Urbain, adjacent to the site.
- In the continuation of the MUDZ, it can be opened up to the MUDZ when it has been implemented.

5. Project site (framed in yellow)

5.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT SITE

The area of the project site is approximately 3.5 hectares and it is mainly made up of 3 working zones:

1. A central zone to be used for recreation.
2. A zone produced by demolition of an apartment block, between a recently renovated paved square (Cité Jardin) and a green area.
3. A linear tree-lined section along Rue E. Urbain, which acts as a physical and visual separation of the estate from the rest of the built-up area.



Aerial map and photo 14: breakdown of the working zones on the project site.

5.2 THE CITÉ JARDIN

Cité Jardin, located to the north, in the centre of the considered site, has already undergone significant conversion, including work which took place in several phases between 2010 and 2014. It includes renovated housing, new buildings and top-quality public spaces.



Map 15: layout of the public spaces in Cité Jardin.

The layout of the public spaces in Cité Jardin can be found above. Demolition of an apartment block with 23 flats, in the circled zone, was carried out in May 2012. Today, this zone is not built-up or developed, as shown in the aerial view below:



Photo 16: aerial view, in which zone 2 of the project site is emphasised.

5.3 REGULATORY CONTEXT

In the Area Plan, the designated use is housing (red zone).

It is located in a “terraced construction area” in tome 3 of the municipal structural framework, of which an extract can be found below:

This zone includes the social housing estates managed by a public sector operator but also terraced constructions such as the mining cottages, garden cities, etc., typical of the urban entity and the region.

The built-up elements are characterised by constructions that are most often adjoining and repetitive in appearance to form a uniform overall aspect.

Objectives

Since the intention of the terraced constructions is to resemble one another, it is necessary to guarantee the continuation of such uniformity with regard to the dimensions, alignments, décors and façades, etc.

Text 17: extract of tome 3 of the Municipal Structural Framework, conducted by IDEA for the City of La Louvière (September 2004)

Urban development guidelines:

For the recommendations specific to this area, it is necessary to refer to the Municipal Urban Planning Regulations.

The density for future projects in terraced construction areas falls between 20 and 30 homes per hectare (an average value which needs to be calculated for the entire scope of the project).

6. Economic & social data

6.1 CORRELATION WITH THE EUROPAN 15 THEME “PRODUCTIVE CITIES”

The site is currently chiefly occupied by housing. Apart from a section located along Rue E. Urbain, the site is solely comprised of social housing blocks, built in successive eras.

The social function of the European site will particularly involve providing the population with employment opportunities in the neighbourhood, in a setting of quality, which will boost social cohesion.

The aim is to incorporate productive activity zones into these currently mono-functional areas, so as to establish proximity between workplaces and living spaces, to boost productive relations within residential neighbourhoods by introducing collective activities and facilities, and to provide employment opportunities within residual spaces, which improve the quality of residential conditions.

New business premises are planned and aimed at small (or very small) and medium sized businesses (SMBs), which will provide an economic boost to this area. The ambition is to incorporate resources and functions that give rise to synergies and new interactions with the existing environment in order to try and work towards implementing a circular economy. The challenge will also entail creating new production premises that are consistent with the concept of ecological transition, based on attentive and good management of resources (water, air, soil, energy, etc.), as well as mobility that is consistent with productive areas and urban life.

Throughout the municipality's territory, industrial wasteland is gradually being converted, especially around the site. For example, the plan is to create a cultural centre, housing units and

premises for artists on the site of the former Boch pottery works, to convert former slagheaps into enjoyable green spaces, and to breathe new life into the city centre thanks to top-quality public spaces, etc. All these projects have been carried out by the City of La Louvière with multi-functionality of programmes aimed at bringing about the productive cities of tomorrow as a guiding principle. It is therefore only natural that this ongoing conversion should have a favourable spill-over effect on our “commuter town”, to trigger its transformation into a productive, lively and dynamic district.

6.2 THE MUNICIPALITY’S REQUIREMENTS

The text below, an extract from the UPER on the “Chemin des Diables” MUDZ (Nov. 2011), p62/158, summaries the needs of the municipality in terms of employment and housing:

The diagnostic carried out at municipal level allows us to describe the key features of its probable development during the next fifteen years and to surmise its needs over the same period.

The geographical situation of La Louvière, near to two motorways (the E42 and E19) and with two railway stations, help to make it an attractive municipality.

The City of La Louvière accounts for more than a quarter (29%) of the total population in the Centre Region. It should also be noted that the population has increased, although less significantly than for the populations of the Centre Region and Walloon Regions. This slight rise in La Louvière’s population, coupled with the generalised decrease in the size of households as well as ageing of the population suggests that there will be a rise in demand for small and medium sized housing. At a cautious estimate, we consider that the potential increase in new homes by 2025 will be in the region of 5,500.

The strategic study for implementation of the MUDZ conducted by COOPARCH-RU arrived at the following conclusion concerning the current situation: demographic growth combined with negative evolution in the size of households should:

- Lead to a demand of 300 to 400 new homes by 2025.
- Require a gross area of approximately 3.5 hectares in school infrastructures, i.e. a minimum of 10 hectares of collective facilities by 2012.
- Necessitate the creation of 5,500 jobs within the municipality (40 to 50% of the area) and subsequently require 180 hectares to develop economic activities with an average density of 30 FTE per hectare.

To meet such demand, many housing construction projects are already underway. The map below* includes the large-scale projects currently under consideration within a radius of 3 km around the centre of La Louvière. This radius, which can be accessed within 10 minutes by bicycle, corresponds with the compact urban masterplan recommended in order to encourage alternative transport means to cars, as well as all the conditions conducive to sustainable urbanisation. More than 1,900 homes are planned. This more or less corresponds to a 30% increase in the number of homes estimated for 2025.

Text 18: an extract from the UPER on the “Chemin des Diables” MUDZ (Nov. 2011), conducted by JNC for the City of La Louvière.

** See map 11 (“figure 30”) in this document.*

6.3 THE PROGRAMME: “STRIVING FOR INTEGRATED URBAN DIVERSITY”

The programme proposes to incorporate a multi-functional building (in zones 1 and/or 2), in keeping with the recently constructed public space and housing. The creation of new productive

modules at ground-floor level, compatible with housing in the upper levels, will make it possible to breathe new life into this residential area that was previously (almost exclusively) mono-functional.

The size of the modules will be adapted in accordance with the businesses that set up there.

The programme also aims to create a productive street (in zone 3) by converting the linear section located on a portion of Rue Emile Urbain, which runs alongside the site. This section measuring almost 500 m in length will be reworked sequentially in order to make it possible, on the one hand, to create openings and connections with the rest of the built-up area and, on the other hand, to set up convenience shops and services, run by very small, small and medium sized businesses, with the unloading and storage zones required to allow suitable development of such businesses.

A third area of work concerning filling unoccupied areas (i.e. non-urbanised zones in the city) within the district via production activities or local micro-farming could also be studied in a later phase.