

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: **Confidential**

Meeting date:	30th September 2009
Issue Date:	8th October 2009
Scheme Location:	Roath Basin, Cardiff Bay
Scheme Description:	BBC studios
Planning Status:	Pre-application

Part1: Presentation

The BBC intends to relocate production facilities for the drama series Casualty, Dr Who and Pobol y Cwm, to Cardiff from Bristol and Llandaff. There is also an option for the BBC to move its headquarters from Llandaff to Roath Basin in the longer term. The intention for this scheme is to create a strong BBC presence with an exciting landmark building. This is the function of the proposed decorative facade which uses a timber rainscreen set forward from the plain office block and studio 'sheds' behind. Various versions of this 200 metre long frontage have been produced and there is ongoing debate within the team as to which version to take forward.

A detailed planning application will be made during the third week in October, with a planned start on site early in 2010. The programme for the project is governed by the need for the BBC to begin filming in Cardiff in August 2011. A Section 73 application to update the original Farrell masterplan was submitted mid-September 2009. The main variation is the relocation of the main spine road to create a sufficiently large plot for the BBC's needs.

The size of this first phase enables the necessary infrastructure to be installed which will service the whole masterplan area. Bus routes will operate from day one. A BREEAM assessor has been engaged at an early stage and a pre-assessment score of 82% has been achieved. Even with the expected loss of 10% of credits as the project develops, this will still give an Excellent rating.

The developer intends to use the phasing and long term nature of the development to institute an extensive programme of meanwhile uses on the site. There will also be a digital media centre to be designed by Ash Sakula, along the lines of those already developed in Sheffield, Leeds, Leicester and Barnsley. Following the catalyst of the BBC

project, discussions have been held with related media industries and with a social housing provider, and the commitment to genuine mixed use remains.

The Local Authority welcomes this proposal in principle while recognising the inherent challenges, such as the grain of the built form and its relationship with the spine road. The boundary treatment also needs further consideration. It will be important to ensure that this development does not compromise development on adjacent plots.

Summary of key points arising from discussion, to be read in conjunction with Part 2 of this report.

The Panel recognised the significant benefits of this large and prestigious project as a catalyst for the development of Roath Basin and the whole Bay area. We support the concept and the early stage designs, and we think it has the potential to become an exemplar of sustainable development. However, many unanswered questions remain and there are areas where we have major concerns. In summary:

- We support the flexible approach to attracting further development and encouraging meanwhile uses for the site.
- We are encouraged that this scheme will deliver the major infrastructure and public transport provision from the beginning.
- We remain to be convinced that enough work has yet been done to ensure that the public realm works in terms of legibility, connectivity, movement, pedestrian/vehicle interaction and the creation of sociable street spaces within busy traffic routes. The parking access for the future blocks to the north west, and the nature of the space around the main BBC entrance, will all contrive to impact on the potential quality of the public realm.
- We would encourage the team to strive to meet the BREEAM Outstanding rating. In particular the potential for a district heating scheme should be fully explored, based on whole life assessment, and the necessary infrastructure installed in the first phase.
- We fully support the design approach to the façade, though suggest consideration be given to increasing its height so as to better relate it to the likely scale of surrounding blocks. Whilst we have no objection to the use of timber for this façade per se, the attention to constructional detailing will need to be exemplary if such a material is not to weather badly in the local climate.
- The opportunity should be taken to create a piece of real landscape on the acoustic wall.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

The Panel commented on five main aspects of the proposal:

1. **The revised masterplan** and the reduction of the plots identified for B1 type uses should be assessed in terms of the impact on the viability of the site to the north west. The developer is confident about the viability of the adjacent blocks, especially given the potential of the BBC as a catalyst. A key decision will be the location of the digital media centre. It is more difficult to predict the take-up on the blocks to

the north west but the layout will be kept sufficiently flexible to meet demand as it arises. It is hoped that the benefits of co-location will result in the development of a new BBC headquarters nearby.

2. **Public realm.** The new spine road will be designed as a series of sociable spaces, with the focus being around the main entrance area in the centre of the long frontage. The dimensions of the LDA street plans will be respected with approximately 17.5 metres between buildings. We had reservations about how this approach would work in the middle of a long, straight, and relatively narrow road. We would need to be convinced by further drawings showing sufficient space for drop-off arrangements, bus lay-bys and general public gathering which such a prominent new building will require around its main entrance. The team agreed that the variety of spaces would need to be better defined, possibly by setbacks, raised surfaces or changes in materials. Some of the elevation options appear to offer more legibility in this regard, especially given they will almost always be viewed obliquely. The generous width of the pedestrian walkway [6 metres] will allow for some tree planting, and the street layout on the north side will not be limited by underground works.

The parking ratio has been reduced in line with Local Authority policy, and there will be a green travel plan. The overall parking requirement, both for the BBC and the proposed digital media centre, is therefore less than originally envisaged and is provided in two areas at either end of the linear site. We noted that the likely on-plot parking arrangements for future development to the north west would impact on the side streets running east/west and may change their nature as intimate, pedestrian-dominated spaces. The developer confirmed their intention to retain a fine grain of built form along the waterfront and to align the main entrance to the BBC studios with one of the east/west routes.

The nature of the entrance roundabout is the subject of productive discussions with the Highways department. The client stated that public access to the buildings will be possible but limited by the programming schedule.

There will be a 6.5 metre high impermeable boundary around the site, as required and specified by ABP. This will be supplemented by an acoustic wall for privacy and noise protection.

3. **Functional aspects.** These are contained in a very detailed and exact brief. We had no further comment other than to note the distinct pedestrian routes into specific studios from the rear car parks, and the partially covered walkway/truckway running between the office block and the studios, with connections across.
4. **BREEAM.** We welcomed the pre-assessment score which is tantalisingly close to an Outstanding rating, and we encouraged the team to try and achieve this. However, we noted that the energy score was relatively weak, and urged the team to pursue the option of a district heating system and to continue to explore links with the proposed energy-from-waste plant nearby and local renewable schemes. For this to succeed, it will be vital to install the necessary infrastructure in the first phase. It should be possible to attract an ESCO to provide the capital cost and the team will learn lessons from The Works at Ebbw Vale who are engaged in a similar

exercise. We questioned the location of the plant room within this scheme and noted that a separate, centrally located energy centre might be more appropriate.

There would be energy benefits in enclosing the central street, and this would also create a more usable sociable space, but might conflict with the strategy for cross-ventilation.

5. **The Facade.** We fully supported the drama and theatricality of the facade treatment. The silhouette of the facade provides a delightful and interesting interplay against the existing saw-tooth profile of the dock sheds. It will be important to introduce some verticality and to give the entrance sufficient legibility and prominence, possibly by varying the height. The treatment of the facade should also be varied along its length to reinforce the relationship between the theatricality of the facade and the varied activity behind. The exact location of the entrance will be a critical driver for the layout of the whole south side of the Roath Basin site.

We think the scale of the screen wall should be increased as it is in danger of appearing insubstantial when viewed from across the Basin, and of being dominated by the 5-6 storey blocks envisaged to the west. The relationship to the adjacent sites would also be improved by increasing the scale. It will be important to establish and maintain a high quality of detailing around the openings and the soffits, and to allow for the effects of weathering on timber in this maritime context, and to avoid staining

The treatment of the acoustic wall to the south west of the main facade is undecided and the team is still open to inspiration. We support the idea of a planted wall as a piece of landscape, possibly using species which have self-sown on the site. The current proposal does not make the vertical landscape impact that a building of this scale would justify. Other possibilities include using the wall as an art installation, similar to the one which has recently been commissioned at Century Wharf.

The Design Commission for Wales Design Review Panel and staff welcome further consultation and will be happy to provide further feedback on this report and/or where appropriate, to receive further presentations. Thank you for consulting the Commission and please keep in touch with us about the progress of your project.

A Welsh language copy of this report is available upon request.

Appendix 1: Attendees

Asiant/Client/Datblygwr:
Agent/Client/Developer

Igloo Regeneration [Mark Hallett]
BBC [Chris Robson]

Pensaer/Architect:

FAT Architects [Sean Griffiths]

	DEGW [Steve Smith]
Consultants:	Arup [Elaine Harvie]
AwdurdodCynllunio/ Planning Authority	Cardiff City Council [Nigel Hanson]
Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio: Design review panel: Alan Francis [Chair] Cindy Harris [Officer] John Punter	Roger Ayton Phil Roberts
Lead Panellist:	John Punter
Sylwedyddion/Observers:	Simon Hartley [DCFW]