

# Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

## Review Status: **Confidential**

Meeting date:	20th January 2010
Issue Date:	2nd February 2010
Scheme Location:	Roath Basin, Cardiff Bay
Scheme Description:	Digital Media Centre
Planning Status:	Pre-application

## Part1: Presentation

This proposal has been developed from a business case-driven brief. In contrast to the BBC studios, this will be a publicly accessible building and will serve as a meeting place and connection point for small businesses in the creative industries. The building therefore has been designed to facilitate those connections. It will need to 'stand alone' at first, pending the further development of the basin.

The Panel was reminded about the public realm strategy for the whole of Roath Basin, based on the concept of a hard, rugged exterior and a sheltered, protected interior. The DMC is in a strategic position, on a site which links the waterfront with the internal street.

The progress of the design has been fast-track and has changed considerably from the sparse pre-review material which we were sent. The concept was inspired by a simple section of timber, with smooth long faces and serrated edges. This will be developed as a solid, heavyweight brick structure, with smooth painted brickwork on the main facades, and natural, fair-faced serrated brickwork on the ends, interspersed with full height glass panels, oriented away from the south west. Windows will be high performance timber and all materials will be chosen for their durability. Bright steel pods and a crane-line sculpture help to give the entrance legibility.

The internal layout supports meeting and conference facilities and a range of different size businesses. There is a large communal roof terrace and the saw tooth roof profile provides north east facing light into the studios below, while the south west facing pitches give good orientation for solar panels. A temporary refuse/recycling pod is located to the east and 25 parking spaces are provided to the south west – again pending more permanent arrangements as adjacent sites are developed. Cycle spaces are located prominently at the front of the building, and showers are provided internally.

The Local Authority is broadly supportive of the quirky design approach in this location, which adds interest and invites public engagement. They have some concerns about the painted brickwork and would like to see more visual cohesion with developments across the Bay and with the BBC building. The proposal should consider the formation of Timber Street and the beginning of a street pattern. The developer aims to submit a detailed planning application in 4-6 weeks.

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

The Panel welcomed the presentation and strongly supported the aspirations, proposed form, materiality and concept for this site. We think the design development so far is very good, with the potential for becoming an exemplary scheme, especially if a BREEAM Outstanding rating is achieved. We note that the scheme has benefitted from an excellent brief and positive client involvement and we have confidence that the team will fulfil the promise shown at this early stage. The following minor issues remain to be resolved:

- The quality of materials and detailing will be challenging but critical to success.
- The upper floor layouts are prosaic and do not replicate the quality demonstrated by the ground floor spaces. The corridor dimensions, daylight and ventilation strategy need to be reconsidered.
- We are not convinced by the crane structure, as a new replica of an historic artefact, and would prefer to see something more functional such as a full height hoist.
- We fully support the minimum BREEAM commitment, and urge the team to do everything possible to achieve an Outstanding rating.
- More work is needed to define and illustrate the building's relationship with Main Street and the waterfront in particular. We support the prominence of the recycling facilities and cycle racks.
- Given the importance and proposed use of this building, the idea of realigning the building in plan, so that it breaks the grid, might be investigated.

### **Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full**

The Panel strongly supported the design concept and its interpretation, as a solid heavyweight block reminiscent of a dockside warehouse, using brick as the primary material. We were reassured by the proven longevity and 15 year guarantee of the mineral based Keim coating system to be used. The potential problem of frost and water penetration needs to be resolved for the serrated brickwork, and close attention to specification and detailing will be important to ensure high quality materials and workmanship. The architect agreed and suggested that the brickwork might be used as a rainscreen with a ventilated cavity behind. The timber windows will also need careful specification and detailing to ensure performance and durability.

The Panel was pleased to learn that an Excellent BREEAM rating was a minimum requirement and, given a pre assessment score in the mid 70's, there is an aspiration to

achieve an Outstanding rating. We did not think that a strategy for cross ventilation would work with a largely cellular office plan. We accepted that natural ventilation could work relying on circular currents from openable windows, given the maximum room depth of 6m, generous floor to ceiling heights and few applied finishes. Alternatively, stale air could be vented into the corridors and through openings in the roof. Windows will be inset behind a 350mm deep reveal and the assumption that this will provide adequate shading on the south west facade should be tested by modelling. Heating will be delivered via an underfloor system and the fuel will be low carbon, possibly using water from the Basin passed through a heat pump, or waste heat from the proposed energy-from-waste plant on Ocean Park.

The Panel thought that the upper floor layouts did not reflect and extend the interactivity and excitement shown on the ground and mezzanine floors. We were not convinced by the strategy of trying to enliven the upper floor corridors and create space for interaction, simply by locating a larger than normal tea point at one end of the building. The architect pointed out that the upper floor corridors were wider than standard and so would allow for some informal activity, and the glazed openings into the studios would encourage communication and visual connections. The roof lights will light the top floor well and we would like to see daylight brought down into intermediate floors and corridors.

The Panel was not convinced by the 'crane' device, intended to reflect the form of a floating crane operating in the historic docks. It should not be necessary to mark the entrance or announce the building in this way, and we thought this addition appeared contrived and made the elevation too 'busy'. We suggested that an alternative could be to install a full height hoist of the kind used in old warehouses, which could also serve a practical purpose.

Where transparent sections are used at ground floor, adjacent to the entrance and between the 'pods', a timber framed glazed screen with integral shutters will largely obscure the circular columns which form part of the structure. We welcomed the prominent location of the cycle racks, beside the main entrance.

As adjacent sites come forward for development, it is likely that other blocks will join on to this one and this should be anticipated in the fenestration and daylight distribution internally. The location of the entrance responds to the masterplan and the developer anticipates that people will approach on foot and cycle from the south west as much as from the north east. The architect stated that he had considered an internal ramp to respond to the slope of the site, but that it had proved impossible to achieve a 1:20 slope.

The Panel suggested that the importance of the building might justify a realignment which would break the grid. However, the grid layout has only just been agreed and needs to be established by the first buildings, although there may be possibilities for fracturing the grid in the future. We noted that there was little information regarding the immediate public space around the building. Further detail will be necessary to describe how the building addresses Main Street and relates to the waterfront. The courtyard in front of the main entrance will develop into a street – Timber Street – as more development comes on line and its functions change. In the interim, temporary or meanwhile uses will animate this space and the larger space to the north east.

**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] WAG
Pensaer/Architect:	Ash Sakula [Robert Sakula]
Consultants:	LDA [Sophie Thompson] Creative Space Management [Toby Hyam]
AwdurdodCynllunio/ Planning Authority	Cardiff CC [Richard Cole]
Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio: Design review panel: Alan Francis [Chair] Cindy Harris [Officer] Carole-Anne Davies [CEO]	Toby Adam Lynne Sullivan Phil Roberts Maria Asenjo
Lead Panellist:	Lynne Sullivan
Sylwedyddion/Observers:	n/a

**NB:** Mark Hallett is a Commissioner of the Design Commission for Wales