

MediaCity rises from the docks

If you've been to Salford or took in a game at Old Trafford recently then you can't help but notice the sea of tower cranes dominating the skyline – MediaCity:UK is changing the face of Salford – it will also change the face of the country's media industry



The redevelopment of the once thriving Salford docks has been ongoing for some considerable time – a variety of commercial and residential properties have been built overlooking Salford's waterfront in recent years and the opening of the acclaimed performing arts centre, The Lowry, in 2000, and The Imperial War Museum shortly after, firmly established The Quays as one of the most successful regeneration

schemes in the country.

As with most areas, the recent property boom saw an influx of high-rise residential developments and in mid 2007 it was announced that the land adjacent to the old Pier 9 was to be redeveloped into a media hub of national and international significance.

The BBC were looking at decentralising several of its departments together with relocating its Manchester operation currently based in the city centre. In face of stiff competition from other sites in

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the North West, land owners and developers, Peel Investments, together with Salford City Council successfully secured BBC as anchor tenants onto the site and contractors Bovis Lend Lease commenced work shortly after.

The vision was to create a globally significant new media city capable of competing with similar emerging locations in places such as Copenhagen, Seoul and Singapore.

The move to MediaCity will represent the BBC's largest





presence outside London, and from 2011, will be home to five departments, including two TV channels, two radio stations, BBC Childrens (including CBBC and CBeebies), BBC Formal Learning, BBC Future Media & Technology, BBC Radio 5 live and BBC Sport.

1,200 London-based posts will relocate along with 800 posts currently based in BBC Manchester.

Phase 1 is currently one of the largest construction sites in the country, but it is envisaged that Mediacity:UK will ultimately span a 200-acre site, creating seven million square feet of business, residential and retail floorspace.

MediaCityUK will provide employment for more than 15,000 people, and provide opportunities for more than 1,000 businesses.

Buildings currently being constructed under Phase One are:

- Three eight-storey office blocks for the BBC, including tv and radio studios, giving a total floor

area in excess of 35,000m²

- Two high-rise residential towers providing 400 apartments
- A multi-storey car park with more than 2,000 parking spaces
- A 13-storey office block providing 17000m² of speculative office accommodation plus over 12,000m² of teaching space for the University of Salford
- A studio block. Designed by Fairhursts Design Group, it is perhaps one of most complex buildings ever constructed in Salford, incorporating five TV recording studios with audience capabilities, the Philharmonic Orchestra studio, several multi-purpose studios including recording space for CBBC and associated ancillary accommodation such as changing rooms, bars, workshops, and offices.

The building also incorporates two high-rise

“URBAN VISION PARTNERSHIP LTD DELIVERS THE BUILDING CONTROL SERVICE ON BEHALF OF SALFORD CITY COUNCIL”

towers (18 and 23 storeys respectively) that will house several floors of post-production offices giving more than 4,000m² of floor space, a 218-bedroom hotel with restaurant and function facilities, and a further 17,000m² of speculative office accommodation. This building alone has the potential to accommodate over 7,000 people.

Urban Vision Partnership Ltd delivers the building control service on behalf of Salford City Council and was formed in 2005 through a joint venture between Salford City Council, Capita Symonds and Morrison Highways Maintenance.

The majority of employees from the council's Development Services department were seconded in to the new company in what was thought to be the first model of its kind in the UK.

Harnessing the skills and experience of experts across the property, planning and highways sectors, it delivers outstanding innovation across all service areas with a



genuine commitment to service excellence.

These service areas include:

- Building Control/Building Regulation consultancy
- Development Control services
- Highways and street lighting maintenance
- Traffic and transportation services
- Engineering design services
- Property management
- Property development and regeneration
- Facilities management services
- Architectural and landscape design services
- Property maintenance
- Education asset management services
- Geological services
- Partnering and procurement consultancy services
- Health & safety/planning supervision

Prior to the announcement

that the scheme was to go ahead, Urban Vision Building Control had already spent a considerable amount of time with the design team focusing on key issues such as fire safety, access and Part L requirements.

With the environment high on the political and public agenda, the design team has ensured that the scheme gives real consideration to sustainability and environmental management at every stage.

All the BBC's offices will be built to meet BREEAM's 'Excellent' rating for sustainability, and during the construction stage, a bespoke environmental management plan will be implemented to minimise the use of resources and prevent pollution – all of which are independently audited by the Considerate Constructors Scheme.

The project will also be utilising a tri-generation scheme supplying power, and chilled and hot water to the whole of the site.

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Public transport will be encouraged and the scheme involves extending the Metrolink to the heart of the site with connections direct into Manchester City Centre every six minutes. This will be supplemented by a grid of pedestrian and cycle friendly tree-lined streets, parks and green spaces.

Urban Vision Building Control has a proven track record of dealing with fire safety for large and complex buildings and this experience has proved invaluable in dealing with the fire safety aspect of a project of this scale.

Urban Vision has worked closely with Fire Engineering consultants (Faber Maunsell and WSP) to develop the fire strategies for each building and a huge variety of different fire safety issues have been encountered.

Helping to develop the fire safety package has been one of the many challenges addressed by building control.

The studio building has



- ▶ been particularly challenging. The operational requirements of the building are driven by the need to ensure live broadcasts are uninterrupted for all but the most serious of events and this has resulted in the development of a staged/phased evacuation strategy.

The complex nature of the building together with strict operational requirements has meant that standard fire safety guidance has been supplemented by bespoke fire engineering solutions.

Phillip Crowe of Urban Vision Building Control, said:

“The approach to providing the building control service at MediaCity has always been one of attempting to ensure that the Building Regulations and client requirements are met through performance-based solutions rather than only adhering to traditional prescriptive guidance.

“This has been recognised by the design teams and will help deliver an impressive and innovative development.”

Each studio space is compartmented from the rest of the building by high periods of fire resistance, with escape

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routes provided into separate zones via the front or back-of-house areas. This results in a strategy that allows the zone immediately effected by a fire to be evacuated with the other parts of the building remaining operational.

Completion of the current phase is due from late 2009 through to 2012.