



Biocontainment facility for space samples

A team led by SEA has won a contract from the European Space Agency (ESA) in the Aurora Core Exploration Programme, to define the requirements and initial concept for a Biocontainment Facility. The facility will be required to safely handle any samples that may be brought back from Mars.

Under international treaty, it is mandatory that samples from Mars or other planets be sealed off from the terrestrial environment until they have been tested for the presence of life or fossil life forms. It is also important that any samples returned are not contaminated by the Earth's environment. A parallel activity at the Natural History Museum, funded by the STFC, will examine potential methods for sterilising the extra-planetary material while not changing the geochemistry.

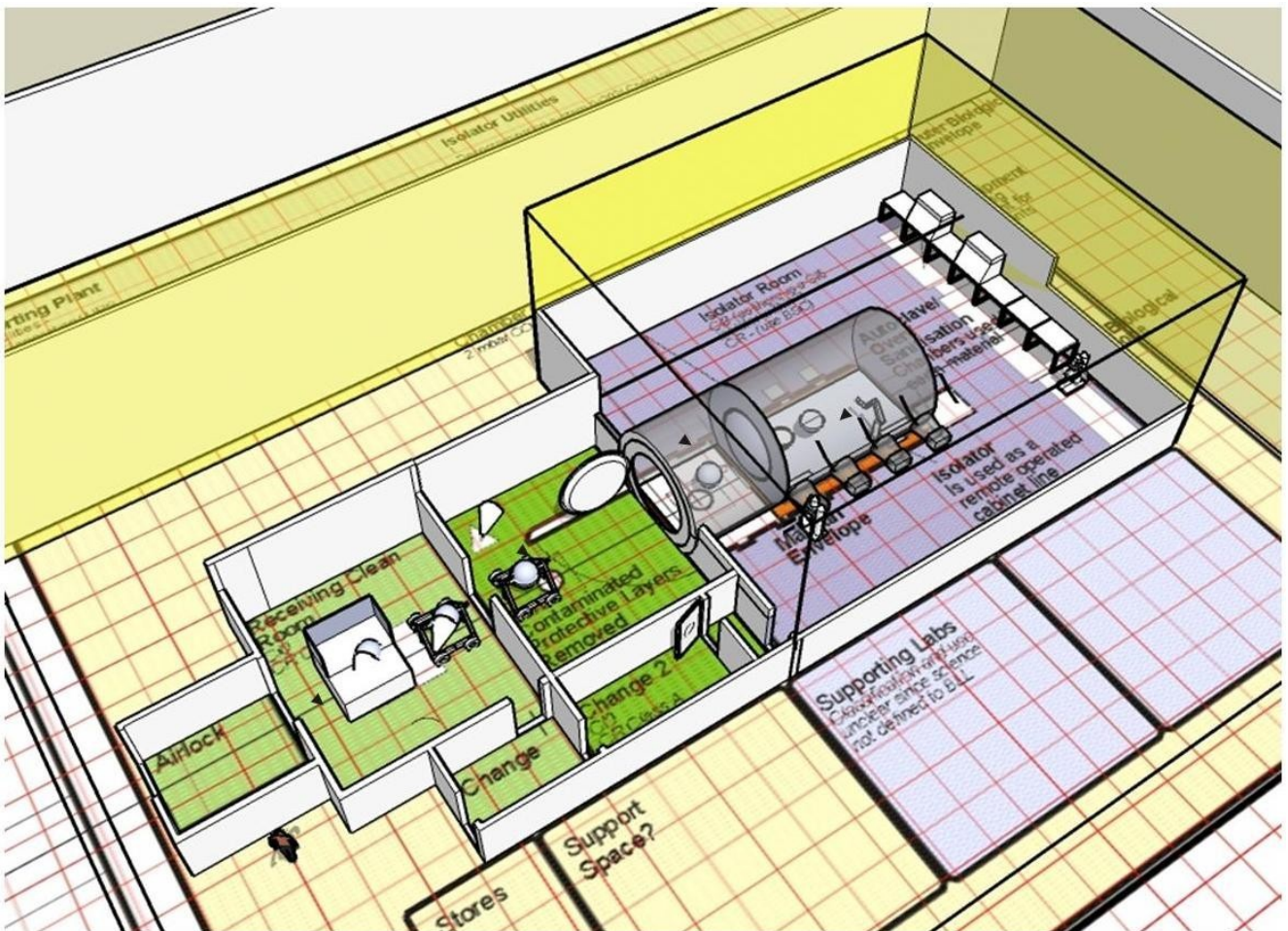


Image source: The Technology Division of Bovis Lend Lease UK