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Design Review Report

Maggie's Centre, Cardiff
October 2013



Declarations of Interest

Panel members, observers and other relevant parties are required to declare *in advance* any interests they may have in relation to the Design Review Agenda items. Any such declarations are recorded here and in DCFW's central records.

Review Status

CONFIDENTIAL

Meeting date	Thursday 17th October 2013
Issue date	25 th October 2013
Scheme location	Velindre Hospital, Cardiff
Scheme description	Health Care Building
Scheme reference number	26
Planning status	Pre-application
Declaration of interests	None recorded

Consultations to Date

An initial meeting with Cardiff Council Local Planning Authority took place on site on 18th October 2012. No wider consultation has yet begun.

The Proposals

The project is the latest in the series of Maggie's Centre buildings, providing a cancer care centre that is freely available to the community. There are currently 17 Maggie's Centres in the UK, with more planned and this is the second in Wales, following the Maggie's South West Wales centre in Swansea, completed in December 2011. Each centre has the same brief which adheres to the ethos and original principles set out by Maggie. Providing drop-in support for anyone affected by cancer within the grounds of hospitals, centres should have a domestic scale and should feel welcoming and familiar to visitors, being less clinical in nature and setting. Maggie's centres are run by small teams of staff and aim to inspire, lift spirits and contribute to well being. Spaces must be open, contain a fireplace, and have the kitchen at the heart which should be immediately visible from the entrance.

The site for this new building is to the north of Cardiff, located at the southern part of the former Whitchurch Hospital site which now forms the grounds of Velindre Hospital. The site benefits from an extant planning permission for a medical facility (a mental health unit) which has not been constructed. The site incorporates many mature trees and is surrounded on the south and west sides by dense vegetation. The proposed 400m² building is mostly single-storey with a pennant sandstone perimeter wall and

copper glass rooflights. The open-plan internal spaces are lined with cedar and are punctuated by courtyards.

Summary

There were several key points specifically identified by the Panel:

- The Panel appreciated a very thorough presentation with hand-drawn sketches and models which clearly explained the design approach. The Panel found the background to Dow Jones Architects and the precedent examples used in the presentation useful in understanding how the design had evolved.
- The close working relationship between client and design team was evident and the design approach responds well to the client ethos. The Panel was impressed with way the scheme has been developed so far and is supportive of the current proposals.
- Landscape will play an important role in this scheme and the landscape strategy and ideas were clearly communicated. The Panel suggested that it would be beneficial for the team to produce an outline landscape management plan for the scheme and wider area which takes a long term view. This should be produced alongside discussions with the hospital/health trust and would provide a long term strategy to which adequate resources could be aligned.
- In terms of materials, the selection and use of stone will be crucial. The Panel was satisfied that the architects demonstrated a good understanding of materials and detailing and the care needed to achieve their aims here. A forthcoming quarry visit will help determine how the stone is used.
- The high quality of the interior spaces was evident, as was Maggie's overall commitment to the use of good interior design and artworks. However the Panel wanted to better understand the impact of use and suggested that images showing the building inhabited would be useful for consultations and planning processes.
- The Panel expressed concerns about inclusive accessibility due to the upstairs space and the proposed use of gravel paths. This should be given further consideration.
- The energy strategy for the building was unclear and needs further exploration. Proposals show a large wall perimeter to floor area ratio which could lead to significant heat loss. The Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) and use of the fireplace to drive central heating could be considered.

- The Panel was encouraged to hear that the architects and landscape architect would remain involved all the way through the delivery of the scheme, and that this would enable control over construction quality and detailing.
- The Panel considered the site use to be appropriate and the approach to the architecture and landscape to be sensitive and intelligent. The Panel also recognised the potential of the project to be an exemplar facility which makes a positive contribution to the health estate and the wider community.

Discussions and Panel Response in Full

Sarah Beard provided an overview of the Maggie's Centres' background and concept. This was followed by a clear and thorough presentation by the architects, covering site analysis, precedents and a clear explanation of the concepts which have all informed the design approach to date. There were also useful explanations of the sequence of spaces designed and the material palette chosen. The landscape architect gave a detailed presentation of the landscape approach which is intended to build a relationship between the building and the site. It is proposed that the team will also provide an outline plan for the management of the wider landscape, outside of the immediate Maggie's Centre site.

The Panel thanked the team for a thorough presentation which had already answered many of the questions they had had prior to the review. The Panel would have preferred to see a comprehensive Design & Access Statement as part of the pre-review material submitted and suggested that the form and narrative of the presentation, including the Client's brief, should form the basis of the document to be submitted in support of the planning application.

The relationship of the building to the landscape had been clearly thought through, however the team should bear in mind the age of the trees and their lifespan informed by the tree survey and supported by a long term management plan. Inclusion and accessibility on the site and the wider landscape should be carefully considered to allow the widest possible use and ease of management.

The first impression for visitors will be vital. The 3D images presented demonstrate how the way the stone is used will be crucial, and this must be well considered. It was explained that the architects' visit to the quarry would help determine these details, and that they were looking at traditional and contemporary precedents.

The simple, controlled palette of materials is a strong statement, and the Panel questioned whether this would provide a mute enough background which could lend itself to being softened by occupation and use.

There was a need for reconciliation between the traditional buildings, of the kind at St Fagans National History Museum, which were referenced in the presentation, and the

ethos of Maggie's Centres to create a 'familiar' environment centred on a kitchen, a hearth and in this case a cwtch. The architects responded by explaining that their aim was for the architecture to provide a plain background to accommodate the natural disorder of life. They explained that the cedar wood interior lining would also be used to form shelves and cupboards, contrasted with plain painted plastered surfaces. The Maggie's Centre representatives explained that the interiors will be well thought through, and that they are happy with the background this scheme provides, including the polished concrete floor. The Panel thought it would be useful to show an indicative furniture layout on the drawings and physical model to give a sense of scale and inhabitation.

The Panel was interested to hear more about the landscape management and maintenance approach. The landscape architect explained that as with other Maggie's Centres, a volunteer group would be set up to look after the immediate site surrounding the Maggie's Centre, and that gardening would be included in the therapies available to visitors. It was agreed that a clear strategy for the wider landscape would be needed, and this would include larger scale works such as lopping, felling and excavating, which would need professional attention. Maggie's Centre and the Health Authority would need to decide who will look after this wider landscape. It is intended that the landscape will be accessible to all those at Velindre.

The Panel expressed some concerns about inclusive accessibility. The design includes a first floor reading/quiet space which is currently proposed as accessed only by a staircase. This space would have wonderful views and the current approach risks them being available only to users able to negotiate the stairs. The team should consider whether this is appropriate, as it would be a shame for the design and detailing to be ruined by the retrofitting of a lift or stair lift. The intended use of this room should be carefully considered.

The Panel had similar concerns about the intended use of gravel paths which could cause problems for those who are finding walking difficult and are perhaps using a walking stick or wheelchair. A firmer, stable surface should be considered and the team agreed that this needs further investigation.

The building is unoccupied in evening and overnight. The Panel suggested that security measures would need to be integrated with the design so as not to ruin the simplicity of the scheme and risk the addition of crude measures at a later date.

The Panel was unclear about the energy strategy, and thought this needed further exploration. The building has a high ratio of wall perimeter to floor area which could lead to significant energy losses, and some of the courtyards and windows will always be in shadow or may not provide the visual connection to the wider landscape that was stated as an aim. Appropriate solutions to these aspects should be carefully considered. The designers explained that they were working with Max Fordham building services engineers, and that through orientation and construction, they intended to take a passive approach to the energy strategy rather than adding high-tech equipment. The building envelope will be highly insulated – above current Building Regulations

requirements and the planned uplift. It will be naturally ventilated, and the use of copper glass will help prevent overheating. It is recognised that the building should be easily maintained by the clients, and a low-tech approach would assist this. The Panel suggested looking at the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI), and considering whether the fireplace could be used to drive the central heating.

The Panel queried how the flat roof would be accessed and maintained. It was explained that there would be access from the first floor reading room. The roof will be covered with single-ply membrane with stone chippings to match the landscape treatment.

It was recognised that the detailing of the scheme will require careful management. The Panel was pleased to hear that a traditional procurement route will be taken, and that the architect and landscape architect will continue to be involved throughout the construction. The Panel recommended further tightening up of the design, particularly in plan, which could save costs and therefore reduce potential budget pressure upon architectural quality.

The designers met with the Local Planning Authority on site. They have seen materials produced so far and have indicated they are content with the design to date. The team reported the scheme is currently at the end of RIBA Stage 2 (formerly Stage C), is on budget and will be ready to be submitted for planning pending a response from this review.

The architects were interested in considering public consultation, although the scheme is not considered controversial. The Panel suggested that this could be useful for informing the public about the scheme. It would be important for Maggie's to explain their ethos and how they operate – for example the provision of drop-in support, the close proximity to an established hospital, the domestic scale and informal feel of the interiors, and that they provide a spiritually and physically uplifting environment – and for the evolution of the designs to be explained in detail. Images showing spaces inhabited would be essential in conveying the human qualities that are so central to the ethos of Maggie's Centres for their buildings to be inspiring, comforting, familiar and personal. It would be important for the team to have a good understanding of the local context and to bear in mind other decisions being made about the site or sites in proximity to it. Local Authority Members, Assembly Members and the Cabinet Member for Health and Well-being should also be informed.

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

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer:	Sarah Beard, Maggie's Centres Geraint Talfan Davies, Maggie's Centres
Architectural/Urban Designer:	Alun Jones, Dow Jones Architects Biba Dow, Dow Jones Architects Cleve West, Landscape Architect
Planning Authority:	
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Ewan Jones
Lead Panellist	Martin Knight Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW Wendy Richards Elfed Roberts Kedrick Davies
Observing:	Carole-Anne Davies, DCFW Sue Jones, DCFW Mike Harvey – South Wales Police