



DESIGN
COMMISSION
FOR WALES
COMISIWN
DYLUNIO
CYMRU

Design Review Report

Health and Wellbeing Centre, Swansea

DCFW Ref: 286

Meeting of 15th September 2022



Review Status

Meeting date
Issue date
Scheme description
Scheme location
Scheme reference number
Planning status

PUBLIC

15th September 2022
23rd September 2022
Healthcare
Swansea
N286
Pre-Application

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 and meeting Agenda items. Any such declarations are recorded here and in DCFW's central records.

Steve Smith, of Swansea Council, declared that he is a Design Review Panel member. All were happy to proceed.

Consultations to Date

None with DCFW.

The Proposals

The proposal is for a purpose-built health and wellbeing centre on Orchard Street in the centre of Swansea. The site currently houses the Elysium Gallery which provides artists' studios and exhibition space. The site also has a party wall with the Volcano Theatre which opens on to High Street and Kings Street runs alongside the site, linking to The Strand.

The aim is to facilitate a new model of care, which will deliver improvements in treatment, care and support delivered in a community setting. The accommodation provided will consist of community dentistry, homeless services, asylum seekers services, community mental health, podiatry services, sexual health services, district nursing, health visitors and GP services. There will also be a pharmacy and café open to the public on the ground floor.

It is anticipated that the project will be tendered via an approved construction framework, and it is likely the scheme will be procured as a single stage design & build form of contract using the NEC form of contract.

Main Points

The Design Commission welcomed the opportunity to engage on this scheme at this stage. It is clear that the project has many positive aspirations, both in terms of improving the quality of care in this area, and of enlivening the street frontage and contributing to more general urban improvements in this part of Swansea. It is important to take the time at this stage to ensure the design helps to fully realise these aspirations.

User Experience and Innovation of Brief

The user experience, for both those providing and receiving the care, must be at the forefront of the design of this building. This is not yet coming through in the design ideas presented. The key design moves at this stage seem to be the double height entrance space with glazed frontage to the street, and large, two storey window frames at upper levels. However, the full benefits of these for the building users have not been clearly articulated. A stronger design idea is needed to inform the welcome into the building and aid circulation through it on all floors. The innovative objectives for the scheme need to be reflected throughout the design process and into the final design and completed construction of the scheme.

The brief is ambitious, and raises complex, and sometimes contradictory, issues. It is therefore important that the design team have sufficient time to fully explore the best way to approach and fulfil the brief. The design team would benefit from working jointly with an interior designer, particularly when approaching highly sensitive and diverse use of the interior spaces throughout the building.

Studies of what the many different users' needs are and how they are likely to use the space should inform the design. This will help develop the brief into a series of well-thought-out deliverables that are fully informed by the diverse cultural, medical, personal, and privacy needs of those being served by this building.

Circulation and Façade Design

As presented, the scheme includes many corridors, awkward circulation patterns, windowless rooms, and the façade does not reflect the interior of the building or the new model of care that it provides. A sequential spatial planning approach is needed to inform the series of spaces and experiences of users as they move through the building.

Considering the user experience, views from windows, as well as an internal grid of room/wall arrangements, and allowing these to inform the façade will be key to the

success of this scheme. The proposed treatment of the façade on the current iteration of this scheme does not reflect the sensitivity and innovation of what is happening within the building. While the scale and massing of the building seem to be appropriate for this city centre location, the façade treatment increases the apparent scale of the building and does little to respond to the existing context.

The entrance could be more obvious from the street and consideration should be given to the impact of necessary shutters and security measures for the pharmacy on the design of the ground floor.

Energy Strategy

The design team explained that the energy strategy has yet to be fully explored and it is possible that the energy strategy (along with further consideration of the user experience, windows and internal grid) will result in significant changes to the current façade design. The sustainability strategy and elevation design should be developed together as the former may have implications particularly for the size of windows in relation to overheating.

The relationship between the green roof with solar panels and the structural grid needs to be fully explored to test the weight distribution. This could influence the embodied carbon of the scheme.

Design testing

The design team is encouraged to use physical modelling and higher resolution computer modelling to explore innovative design solutions. Prototyping of spaces should also be considered to test whether they meet the needs of the users.

Next Steps

The Commission would welcome further engagement on this scheme in advance of a planning application being submitted.

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

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer:	Heather Edwards, Swansea Bay University Health Board Elliott Carpenter, Coastal Housing Group
Architect/Design Team:	Alice Stewart, IBI Group Richard Golledge, IBI Group Dean Saxton, Curtins Geraint Hopkins, McCann & Partners Phil Baxter, Asbri Planning
Local Authority:	Stephen Smith, Swansea Council David Owen, Swansea Council

DCFW Design Review Panel

Chair:	Andrew Linfoot
Lead Panellist:	Angela Williams
Panel:	Jun Huang Clare Wilding Steve Smith Jen Heal, DCFW, Design Advisor Efa Lois, DCFW, Place Advisor