

Design Review Report

Maggie's Centre, Cardiff

DCFW Ref: N26

Meeting of 10th February 2017



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

Meeting date	10 th February 2017
Issue date	24 th February 2017
Scheme location	Cardiff
Scheme description	Health Care
Scheme reference number	N26
Planning status	Pre-application

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Declarations of Interest

None declared.

Consultations to Date

No formal pre-application discussion with the local planning authority has taken place yet.

The Proposals

The Design Commission for Wales reviewed a proposal for a Maggie's Centre at Velindre hospital, Cardiff in October 2013, which received planning permission in Spring 2014. In the intervening period Velindre has embarked on a major redevelopment project, which will see a new cancer centre being built to the north of Whitchurch Hospital. A consequence of this development plan is that the site for which planning permission was granted is no longer available to Maggie's. The design team has worked with Maggie's and the hospital trust for the past two years to find an alternative site to build the centre, which would have a relevance both for the existing hospital and the new development. However, such a pivotal site has not been identified.

Therefore, the team are proposing an interim centre to bridge the gap in cancer care until the new hospital is built and Maggie's can be realised on its final site. They are proposing to make the interim centre very quickly and at a considerably lower budget than the original centre.

A site has been secured in the north west corner of the car park at Velindre and they are hoping to be starting construction this summer. The building works with many of the ideas that were explored in the original project. The building is designed to encapsulate an idea about the local landscape and, through the organisation of the building, to take the user away from their situation and project them into another place.

Main Points in Detail

The following points summarise key issues from the review and should be considered to inform work ahead of making a planning application.

Overall Approach

The Design Commission recognises the frustration for the clients and design team due to the change of site and building programme. The new site poses more significant constraints than the original site, but the design team worked hard to make the most of the situation and overcome the limitations. A creative, innovative and sensitive solution is being developed which meets the Maggie's Centre's brief for a welcoming, comforting retreat within the grounds of the hospital - an approach which is commendable. Despite the constraints, this proposal is likely to be an exemplar of good design and the design process demonstrates best practice.

Arrival and Threshold

The site sits within the corner of a car park and there is little scope to accommodate any designed landscape around the perimeter of the building. However, the robustness of the building and any necessary protection from vehicles will need to be considered. It may be prudent to design a 'defensible' strip around the building to protect it from vehicle damage and provide visual separation from the car park environment. It would be better for this to be an integrated part of the design proposal, controlled by the design team, perhaps including a pedestrian-priority area signalled by the surface treatment rather than something utilitarian added after construction.

Once over the threshold the proposed courtyard entrance sequence works well and is a space-efficient way to create a journey which separates visitors from the hospital and its car park.

The landscape design of the courtyard and small area of trees at the back of the building will be important and we welcome the assurance that a landscape designer will be involved at an early stage to work with the rest of the design team.

Construction and Materials

The economic approach to construction and materials is sensible and well-justified for this small, interim building. The proposed use of a single cladding material works well and gives the centre its own identity.

The final choice of cladding material could be bold but will need careful consideration. For example, the weathering effects of oxidising steel over the potentially short lifespan of the building would need to be taken into account.

This building will require elegant, crisp details and junctions to achieving the high quality desired.

Inside the building further design development is needed to find the best solution for making the 'objects' readable within the space. It is also important that the interior feels calming and comfortable and the surface finishes, furniture and soft furnishings will contribute to this.

Services Approach

The proposed innovative servicing and energy strategy, which balances carbon and costs for a temporary building, is commendable. A building services engineer has been involved at an early stage which demonstrates best practice for a small project.

Lessons for the Maggie's Model

This project demonstrates that good, bespoke architecture can be achieved with a limited budget and timetable, on a highly-constrained site. There may be useful lessons which can be learned from this process for the Maggie's Centre model and its deliverability.

We would like to see consideration given to the sustainable future use of the building when the permanent facility is provided.

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

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer:	Sarah Beard, Geraint Talfan-Davies – Maggie's
Architect/Planning Consultant:	Biba Dow, Alun Jones – Dow Jones Architects
Local Authority:	Nick Beckley, Cardiff City Council
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Jen Heal, Design Advisor, DCFW
Lead Panellist	Martin Knight Toby Adam Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW