

Design Review Report

Velindre Cancer Centre

DCFW Ref: N91

Meeting of 25th April 2024



Review Status

Meeting date
Issue date
Scheme description
Scheme location
Scheme reference number
Planning status
Planning status of DCFW comment

Public

25th April 2024
1st May 2024
Cancer Centre
Cardiff
N91
Outline & Reserved Matters Approved
Material consideration

Key Points

- Landscape proposals which include cost-led proposals for changes need clarity and resolution with the client and local authority.
- Façade and fenestration changes are not yet fully resolved and need further work to maintain the qualities of the building's external appearance (as consented) and ensure that the qualities of natural daylight and views are not lost internally. These also still need resolution with the client and local authority.
- Further assurance for the client is needed on the design life of materials and different façade treatments and the maintenance implications of this.
- Project delivery planning should include early action on supply chain capacity.
- The total embodied and whole life carbon of the proposed changes have not yet been calculated.

Consultations to Date

The Design Commission hosted previous Design Reviews in November 2015, March 2016, and November 2017. Workshops were conducted with the Design Commission in March 2018, April 2018, October 2020, and February 2021, as well as direct confidential client feedback during dialogue phases of procurement. Update meetings were held in February 2022 and August 2022.

Welsh Government requested that the Design Commission provide an independent expert view as to the status of the project, proposed changes (from the consented design) and their impact. To this end a meeting was convened on 29th February 2024. Following the signing of the contract and financial close, a further meeting was held on 25th April 2024 with the Design Commission, to consider the landscape strategy and to assess updates to the façade and other proposed changes. It is expected that this is the final design and construction project review meeting.

The Proposal

The proposal is for a new cancer treatment centre with associated parking, landscape works, access and includes arrangements for the relocation of the Maggie's Centre.

Current Design



NMA Proposed Design



CGI image, provided for meeting of 25th April 2024 by White Arkitekter, of proposed updated view of entrance area from the east

Context

The site is situated in north Cardiff, approximately one kilometre north of the centre of Whitchurch Village and 6 kilometres north of Cardiff City Centre. The site area is approximately 14.5 hectares.

Main Points

Landscape

At the meeting of February 2024 the Design Commission understood that the development of landscape proposals was ongoing following feedback, recommendations and requirements from different sources including NRW and following the discovery of dormice on the site. The Commission recommended a further meeting to consider the overall strategy and approach to the landscape along with any proposed changes.

The nature and ethos of the originally proposed 'natural meadow' landscape is now subject to significant change as a result of feedback, NRW requirements and for cost reduction

purposes. We reiterate the need for the right maintenance knowledge and regime to ensure the design intent for the landscape is preserved throughout its lifetime.

An overall narrative as to the approach to landscape was described at this meeting. There was no drawn landscape information to explain strategy and no 3D illustrations of any of the proposed changes in landscape character. From what we were able to understand character changes, including as a result of the dormice, were restricted to the north west area of the site where areas of previously proposed meadow will now be maintained as areas of scrub and bramble, and subsequently allowed to develop as whip planting of trees is allowed to mature. It was noted that potential value engineering changes to roof and café terrace areas had been rejected.

Detail was provided as to the changes and reductions of some tree numbers and species along with their location and the maturity of whips/plants. It appears that fewer changes were proposed near the buildings which require mature trees and that other changes were dispersed across the site. Species requirements for the dormouse habitat are specific and these will be met, we understand. The proposed changes from the consented scheme need to be presented with greater clarity for the local planning authority and members of the public to understand. A clear narrative setting out what has changed, why, the visual appearance of this on day one and the long-term impact would help to give assurance that the changes are acceptable.

Consideration should be given to the availability of UK based tree stock to support the landscape vision and whether some planting, particularly in those areas further from the building, could be implemented earlier to allow the young plants to grow during the construction period. Early reservation of nursery stock for larger trees may be beneficial.

The change in specification to wooden landscape edging has been rethought in favour of retaining the original metal edging.

Materials

The Design Commission's report from the February meeting notes our comment on the changes to materials and the acceptability of moving from copper to zinc on the basis of the technical reasons outlined and the minimal visual difference proposed. However, whilst some further information as to panel sizes or jointing for either the consented copper system or the proposed zinc replacement was provided, the team still need to communicate the changes with absolute clarity for the local authority. On this and reassurance as to materials and other changes, we refer the client, design and delivery team, and the local authority, to our comments in our earlier report of the February 2024 meeting.

Elevations and Fenestration

As noted in our earlier report from the February 2024 meeting: *The fenestration has changed significantly on many elevations without clear explanation. Evidence of exploration and testing of the impact of this was not presented. The reduction in glazing has a significant impact on the external appearance and internal views out to the landscape. The building appears more defensive and less welcoming with fewer or smaller windows.*

Previously the larger number of vertical fins helped to contain each flank of the windows within the metal and timber panel systems. Without this the windows appear more arbitrary and further work is needed to address this effectively.

The loss of the 'crown' façade detail is more significant on the two storey areas of timber and metal façades, compared to single storey versions of these systems where the proportions are different. The horizontal fin helps to address the proportions of this taller element and further testing of this, with or without as many vertical fins, should be carried out.

Addressing the concerns regarding fenestration and façade detail would help to reduce the overall impact of the proposed changes and benefit the external appearance of the building.

At this meeting we received further detail of treatments and detailed analysis of internal room arrangements, considering equipment and furnishing in detail. In addition, horizontal divisions between the crown of the façade and the main floor below has been reintroduced. The panel had mixed views on the detailed changes to the fins, compared to the consented design, but did not have significant concerns with the latest proposed facades. However, the proposals are a change to the consent and need to be conveyed and justified sufficiently clearly for the local authority.

Roof

The change to a simplified plant room screening on the roof is supported but visibility through the mesh should be tested. Mesh is only an effective screen if it is of high enough density and the location being screened is significantly darker than the viewing location. Where there are areas with no roof overhead or at corners where one can see through two walls of mesh, plant is highly likely to be visible through the mesh and solid backing sheets may be needed. Nighttime views should also be considered and lighting in plant areas should be off by default.

Y Lolfa

Our earlier report from the February meeting noted: *The reasons for the changes to Y Lolfa are supported but further work is needed on the design of the ceiling soffit to the clerestory glazing to give the right level of simplicity versus complexity and to ensure practicalities such as power, cleaning windows (internally) and servicing lighting can be achieved. The visual impact of glazing with different G-values or varied frit patterns should also be assessed.*

At this meeting, the design team referred to changes to Y Lolfa in the form of a gridded ceiling, vertical glazing only, simplifying of the structure and improving access for services and maintenance. However, no images were presented to confirm how the design for this area has progressed in response to our previous comments.

Next Steps

We refer the team to the detail of our report from the meeting of February 2024 and those items which remain outstanding and yet to benefit from detailed planning and supply chains considerations and action.

We reiterate:

- a) the need for the final embodied and whole life carbon costs to be fully calculated. The proposed changes need to be assessed against the target and adjustments made accordingly if the target is likely to be significantly exceeded. Understanding where the largest carbon count results will be important for this.
- b) the need for the changes proposed as a result of design development to be set out clearly with an explanation of why they have been made, both individually and cumulatively, in a clear supplement or addendum to the original Design & Access Statement (DAS) for the local authority. This includes detailed information as to changes to proposals reflected in the original planning consent approved documents for landscape and buildings.

The changes should be clearly and immediately comprehensible for the planning authority and the general public so that the impact can be assessed. This is likely to require side by side comparison of drawings and images with clear annotation as well as detailed spreadsheet information as to species type, planting numbers and time to maturity for particular tree species and any other landscape changes. It is important that the 3D visualisations are accurate and elements such as tree placement are consistent between before and after so that a fair, like for like comparison can be made.

Finally, we expect this to be the final Design Review meeting for these proposals for the Velindre International Cancer Centre. We appreciate the long term commitment of the client, design team and local authority to the independent expert peer review and client support programme offered by the Design Commission for Wales. This project is good and has the potential to be excellent. We wish the whole team and stakeholders every success in its construction and operation.

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

Attendees

Client Team:	David Powell, Project Director, Velindre Matthew Jenkins, Welsh Government Phil Roberts, Design Champion to Velindre Mark Ash, Assistant Project Director, Velindre Jason Hoskins, Velindre
Design Team:	Michael Woodford, Director, London Studio, White Arkitekter Darren Wilson, London Studio, White Arkitekter
Landscape Architects/Consultants:	Adam Taylor, Camlins Paul Shirley Smith, Camlins Rupert Grierson, MacGregor Smith
Planning Consultant:	Nia Russell, Turley
Developer/Construction Team:	Andrea Toledo, Project Contractor, Sacyr UK Elene Castio, Sacyr UK Angel Pedrogosa, Sacyr UK Joana Melo, Sacyr UK
Local Authority:	Steve Ball, Cardiff Council Ken Reid, Cardiff Council Mike Biddulph, Cardiff Council

DCFW Design Review Panel

Chair:	Ewan Jones
Panel:	Toby Adam Simon Richards Carole-Anne Davies, Chief Executive, DCFW Jen Heal, Deputy Chief Executive, DCFW

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.

Phil Roberts declared that he is a member of the DCFW Design Panel, representing Velindre on this occasion on the client team.

Mike Biddulph declared that he is a DCFW Commissioner, representing Cardiff Council at this meeting.

Both the above are standing declarations with which the VCC client team are comfortable and all present at the review were content to proceed.