

Design Review Report

Velindre Cancer Centre

DCFW Ref: N91

Meeting of 29th February 2024



Review Status

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

Public

29th February 2024
6th March 2024
Cancer Centre
Cardiff
N91
Outline & Reserved Matters Approved
Material consideration

Key Points

- 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.
 - Further assurance is needed on the design life of different façade treatments and the maintenance implications of this.
 - The total embodied and whole life carbon of the proposed changes have not yet been calculated.
 - A further session is needed to examine landscape proposals in more detail.
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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.

Financial and design freeze stages are due by mid-March 2024 and officials from the 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.

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 by White, 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

Materials

The change from copper to zinc is acceptable on the basis of the technical reasons outlined and the minimal visual difference proposed, however at this point no information was provided on panel sizes or jointing for either the consented copper system or the proposed zinc replacement.

Reassurance is needed regarding the robustness and service life of the supporting steel backing system for zinc and more detail needs to be seen on the design and joints layout of each system of timber and metal panels.

The design life of all of the façade treatments, the gabions and fire treatment of timber needs to be understood by the client and the implications of future refurbishment or replacement factored into the maintenance budget and programme of the centre.

The Design Commission supports the use of reclaimed brick, but availability of the desired colour needs to be further explored for sufficiency and continuity of supply.

The reasons for reducing the extent of hempcrete are understood, however we encourage the retention of the proposed area of use as this will be an important opportunity to test its use on a building of this nature and set a positive precedent for other projects.

The reasons for changing the timber structure around the bunkers to concrete are understood, however the carbon impact of this change has not yet been calculated and must be factored into an overall review of the carbon budget.

Other changes discussed in the session which do not present a concern included additional Air Handling Units (AHUs) for the Linac and imaging functions, changes to internal partition construction, reduction in medical gas outlets and improved lift specification.

Elevations and Fenestration

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.

Roof

The 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 corner 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

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.

Energy

Future proofing for ground source heat pump technology is reassuring but accommodating the required number of PV panels as an alternative is not yet resolved.

Landscape

The development of landscape proposals is ongoing following feedback, recommendations and requirements from different sources including NRW and following the discovery of dormice on the site. The nature of the proposed more natural landscape will require the right maintenance knowledge and regime. The change in specification to wooden edging is significant across the site and would benefit from being reconsidered and/or revisited with some key locations retaining the original metal edging. The landscape proposals as a whole need to be returned to in a future session with more detail provided and the landscape architect present along with the local authority.

Art and Engagement

Failure to protect budgets and time for best practice in working with arts professionals in an integrated manner with the design team and end users is disappointing. We therefore encourage an approach which sees the retained arts specialist work to add value by bringing the community benefits ambition and the landscape opportunity together in a creative, inclusive engagement process. The incumbent arts consultant will be able to lead and advise on this and should be afforded sufficient status with the client and design team.

Control and Management of Changes

The Commission is encouraged by attention to the structure of the client-side team needed to manage the delivery and commissioning stages of this project: set out as a comprehensive approach to monitor progress and manage any future changes in the design through the use of a team made up of technical advisor, structural engineer, architect, M&E engineer and landscape architect. It is important that the client's and contractor's decision-making processes are clear and understood by all, including the planning authority and Government.

Ongoing Learning

For the public sector in Wales, learning opportunities from this project are significant and should be captured, extracted and shared, now and as the project proceeds. There are potential precedents relating to procurement, design, carbon reduction, innovation and risk that will be valuable to capture, learn from and embed in future practice. Post-occupancy analysis, once operational, will also be important and funds for this should be reserved.

Additionally challenges such as the process for managing dormice on the site should be highlighted. There seems to be scope for better cooperation and alignment between NRW's strict remit and broader WG aims. More broadly, we note a trend for public bodies to increase the extent of their influence upon planning consent processes whilst local authority planning teams, conversely, have reduced resources.

There are many variations within the Mutual Investment Model (MIM) approach which can lead to success or to a compromised scheme. Identification of pitfalls and the ingredients for success should be drawn out of the process. This might also include the role of DCFW as critical friend through the process.

This project has the potential to be one which demonstrates best practice in many areas. The design approach employed has already won the international Future Healthcare Design category in the European Healthcare Design (EHD) Awards, which recognises excellence in design for healthcare environments around the world. The focus of the award aligns with many elements of Welsh policy and legislation including promoting health and well-being, embedding quality improvement and innovation and supporting the delivery of healthcare in accessible, sustainable and equitable ways. The Design Commission is keen for it to be successful and hold firm to the original vision, design intent and ambitions for quality. Careful attention to the items discussed at the review meeting and noted here, is therefore vital at this crucial stage.

Next Steps

The final embodied and whole life carbon costs are yet to be 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.

All the changes proposed as a result of design development should 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).

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. It is important that the 3D visualisations are accurate and elements such as tree placement consistent between before and after so that a fair, like for like comparison can be made.

A further session on landscape proposals should be undertaken and we urge the team to contact us swiftly to make arrangements for this to be scheduled.

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

Attendees

Client:	David Powell, Project Director, Velindre John Cooper, John Cooper Architecture, Reference Design Team Phil Roberts, Design Champion to Velindre Matthew Jenkins, Welsh Government Tracy Hinton, Project Manager, Velindre – attending online via Teams
Design Team:	Michael Woodford, Director, London Studio, White Arkitekter Paddy Perring, Associate, London Studio, White Arkitekter
Planning Consultant:	Nia Russell, Turley
Developer/Construction Team:	Maria Ortega Carreras, Construction Lead, Project Co. Sacyr UK

António Águas, Project and Programme Management
lead, Project Co (Sacyr UK)
Richard Coe - Project Director (Kajima Partnerships
Limited) Attending online via TEAMS

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.