



London Borough of Camden Design Review Panel

Report of Chair's Review Meeting: Maggie's Centre

Friday 21 June 2019

5 Pancras Square, London, N1C 4AC

Panel

Eleanor Fawcett (chair)

Mike Martin

Attendees

David Fowler	London Borough of Camden
Philippa Jopp	London Borough of Camden
Edward Jarvis	London Borough of Camden
Deborah Denner	Frame Projects
Adela Paporisto	Frame Projects

Apologies / report copied to

Richard Wilson	London Borough of Camden
Bethany Cullen	London Borough of Camden
Kevin Fisher	London Borough of Camden

Confidentiality

This is a pre-application review, and therefore confidential. As a public organisation Camden Council is subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOI), and in the case of an FOI request may be obliged to release project information submitted for review.

CONFIDENTIAL

1. Project name and site address

Maggie's Royal Free, Royal Free Hospital, Hampstead, London NW3 2PF

2. Presenting team

Chris Watson	Maggie's Centre
Peter Martin	Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust
Carla Swickerath	Studio Libeskind
Helen Cuthbert	Planning Potential

3. Planning authority's views

The site is located at the rear / south of the Royal Free Hospital site, off Rowland Hill Street, and is currently used for parking. The site is bounded on its southern side by the rear of residential properties facing Aspern Grove and Woodland Walk. There are no listed or locally-listed buildings on the parts of the site in question, and it is not located within any conservation areas. Camden planning officers asked for the panel's views on the architecture, and landscape setting of the Maggie's Centre, and the arrival experience for visitors.

4. Design Review Panel's views

Summary

The panel applauds aspiration to create a Maggie's Centre at the Royal Free Hospital, and the client's ambition for this to be a building of the highest architectural quality. The site presents significant challenges, because of its small area, and relationship with existing surface parking, and the functional character of the neighbouring hospital buildings. The panel appreciates that the iconic architecture proposed is important to attract funding, as well as to encourage people to visit the Maggie's Centre. However, it thinks there is scope to refine the designs to create a warmer and more welcoming interior. Externally, the panel questions the location and legibility of the main entrance, and would encourage further thought about the way the timber fins frame views of landscape, parking, and the existing hospital. The landscape leading up to and surrounding the building will also be very important to its success. Currently, the panel is not convinced that the route to the building will deliver the landscape quality intended by the client. It also notes that it will be a challenge to create a sense of the building being enveloped by greenery, when the distance from building to boundary is about 2m at its narrowest point. The panel's view is that the row of seven car parking spaces adjacent to the site should be sacrificed to allow for an improved landscape setting. These points are expanded below.



CONFIDENTIAL

Architecture

- Although small in scale, the proposals for the Maggie's Royal Free envisage an iconic building, of distinctive architectural character. The panel understands and appreciates the importance of this in terms of attracting funding, and encouraging visitors.
- However, there are a number of aspects of the architecture that would benefit from refinement: the entrances; the way the timber fins frame views; and the interior.
- The panel thinks that the main entrance is not currently in the ideal location – because it is not immediately visible from the landscaped entrance route, and faces onto an unattractive surface carpark.
- The 'back door' is better located, being the first entrance that you see on the arrival route, away from the car park, and with enough space to pause before entering the building.
- The panel recommends that layout of the Maggie's Centre should be revisited to allow the main entrance to be in the location of the current 'back door'.
- Whilst the panel supports the concept of vertical timber fins as the primary external material, giving a sense of approachability and warmth, it would encourage further thought about the way these frame views.
- The relationship between interior spaces and planting that wraps around the building has the potential to create delightful views with planting at eye level.
- However, on the other side of the building, where it faces the carpark and hospital buildings, it would be preferable to create more screened views. The 3D model of the scheme could be used to test the quality of views in different directions.
- Internally, the panel does not yet think the architecture is successful in evoking the feeling of a warm and welcoming domestic environment, which is the client's aspiration. It would encourage further thought about how this could be achieved.

Landscape design

- Although recognising the significantly constrained nature of the site, the panel thinks the quality of the landscape designs for the Maggie's Royal Free will be essential to its success.
- The entrance route to the building, passes under a bridge link, and the panel is not convinced by the planting shown here – which will lack both sun and rain, making it difficult for plants to survive.



CONFIDENTIAL

- The panel would encourage further exploration of the landscaped entrance route, based on a detailed site survey. This should demonstrate how planting that can lift the spirits will thrive, and how places to sit can be integrated.
- On the south and west of the building, dense planting is proposed on steeply sloping banks. Whilst supportive of this in principle, the panel would encourage careful thought about how this can be achieved in reality.
- For example, would it be possible to retain any of the existing lush planting? And how can a feeling of dense planting be achieved when the distance from building to boundary is about 2m at its narrowest point.
- Hard landscaping is currently shown to the north and east of the Maggie's Centre. The panel thinks that introducing planters, benches and greenery here would help create a high quality edge that acts as a buffer to the car park.
- The roof terrace also creates an opportunity for additional planting, which could add to the therapeutic quality of the building, and make it feel more personal.
- The panel feels strongly that the row of seven car parking spaces adjacent to the site should be sacrificed to allow for an improved landscape setting to be created.

Next Steps

The panel would be happy to comment on the proposals again in advance of a planning submission, if requested to do so by planning officers.

