

Design Review Report

Review status

Dyddiad cyfarfod/meeting date
 Dyddiad cyhoeddi/issue date
 Lleoliad y cynllun/scheme location
 Disgrifiad y cynllun/scheme description
 Scheme reference number
 Planning status
 Declaration of interests

Confidential

26 September 2012
 11 October 2012
 Buckley
 Health Centre
 78C
 Pre-application
 n/a

Summary

The Panel welcomed the opportunity to review this scheme although we would have preferred to see it at an earlier stage when our comments would have been more useful. We appreciate that there has been a long and somewhat difficult history to the development of this project. However, we think that the current proposal misses the opportunity to fully exploit the site and the semi-rural context. In summary:

- The proposed atrium/waiting area is a predominantly enclosed space with no views out to the immediate green spaces or surrounding countryside. The patient experience would be improved by visual contact with the external landscape.
- The number of reception points shown was questioned. A centralised reception function, serving the two GP practices, dentist and Health Board Offices, would deliver economies in terms of space and personnel.
- The loss of semi-mature trees on the eastern boundary with Liverpool Road is unfortunate. These need to be assessed to determine if they could be retained if the building were to be moved further back towards the west (although this would compromise potential future expansion space).
- We thought the palette of materials could be simplified, although we understood the design intention to indicate the difference in function of the three blocks.
- The addition of solar panels to a shallow pitched roof running east/west will significantly alter the appearance of the building and presents a challenge to successfully integrate them.

Discussion and panel response in full

It was confirmed that outline planning permission has been granted for access (from Alltami Road), and for parking. An inclusive user group design process had been undertaken with the 3 client groups, and AEDET reviews have been undertaken two or three times during the 5 year history of the project.

The Panel was informed that the inclusion of an internal courtyard in the central space, which featured in earlier iterations, was not included in this proposal. We thought that the atrium space would feel very enclosed and cut off from any visual connection with its immediate surroundings, including Buckley Common to the east, as well as the more distant rural landscape. This would be a huge potential opportunity offered by the site and its context, to decrease stress levels among patients and increase a feeling of relaxation and wellbeing. It is very disappointing that this opportunity appears to be lost with the current proposal.

Although the Panel was informed that shared space has been maximised within the layout, there remain separate receptions (and receptionists) reflecting the different organisational functions. The Panel thought this would be confusing for patients and represented unnecessary duplication. A seating layout of the waiting space, which appeared somewhat characterless and impersonal, would be useful to inform an assessment of its functionality.

We understood the reasons given for the differing forms of the two blocks - one curved to open up the main entrance, the other orthogonal to respond to the consulting room module. We also thought some reference could have been made to the listed building immediately to the south, in built form and/or materials.

The Panel regretted the loss of existing semi-mature trees to the east and we understood this was also a concern for the local community. We thought that the desired legibility of the main entrance from the south would not be compromised by the retention of the trees and hedgerow. However, setting the building further to the west would reduce the space notionally reserved for possible future expansion, on the basis of the current site area. This could only be resolved by a revision of the current footprint and layout, or adjustment to the boundary.

Although the proposed new pharmacy is an existing business, transferring to this new location, we understood that concern has been expressed by the Buckley Town Council at the possibly damaging effect on local businesses.

The Panel recognised that the project would be required to meet BREEAM 'Very Good' with an 'Excellent' rating for energy. While the M&E report on renewable technologies is not yet complete, this is likely to recommend the use of solar thermal and solar photovoltaic panels, to achieve the BREEAM target. If these are to be roof mounted, the visual impact of south facing panels at an angle of 30-35 degrees on a shallow pitched roof running east/west, would be considerable. It is unfortunate that the building design has not been better integrated with the sustainability strategy.

The Panel also commented on the use of aluminium sheeting as the roof finish. This is a high embodied energy material and, given the alternatives available, there appears to be no justification for its use in such large quantities.

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

Appendix 1

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer	Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (Liz Obbard) HPC Wales Ltd (Matthew Hall)
Architectural/Urban Designer	Austin-Smith:Lord (Mike Yates, Chris Pritchett)
Consultants	n/a
Third Party	n/a
Planning Authority	Flintshire CC (Jerry Spencer, Glyn D Jones)
Design Review Panel Chair Officer Lead Panellist	Wendy Richards Cindy Harris Chris Jones Roger Ayton
Sylwedyddion/Observers	Councillor Carol Ellis