

# P-05-1001 Hold an Independent Inquiry into the choice of site for the proposed new Velindre Cancer Centre

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 15 Medi 2020  
Petitions Committee | 15 September 2020

Reference: RS20/13470

**Petition Number:** P-05-1001

**Petition title:** Hold an independent inquiry into the choice of site for the proposed new Velindre Cancer Centre

**Text of petition:** £30M would be spent on roads alone to access the land on which the new Centre is proposed. The old Whitchurch Hospital and the existing Velindre site have access in place already, and are viable alternatives.

The current plan is not in line with best practice for modern joined up cancer care, which is person-centred with services physically linked to larger acute hospitals. Heath Hospital offered Velindre space alongside Cardiff Uni cancer research in their new build due to start in 2023.

Velindre University Health Board would swap their current land (Whitchurch hospital site) for the meadow land, (owned by Cardiff and Vale Health Board). £30M of tax payers money would need be used to build access roads to enable building to take place on this land-locked meadow linked to SSSI.

Taking away the Northern Meadows would be hugely detrimental to physical and mental well-being.

Cancer treatment has become more complex, and patients undergoing treatment have increasingly complex issues. Locating at the Heath alongside Cardiff Uni cancer research, would provide rapid access to intensive care and other key medical and surgical specialties when patients need them.



The proposed Velindre Cancer Centre model is outdated & must be scrutinised. Onsite surgical and medical support services are considered ESSENTIAL:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/east-of-england/wp-content/uploads/sites/47/2019/08/Independent-Clinical-Panel-Report.pdf>

[https://savethenorthernmeadows.wales/?page\\_id=1129](https://savethenorthernmeadows.wales/?page_id=1129)

## 1. Background

A petition to hold an independent inquiry into the choice of site for the proposed new Velindre Cancer Centre has been submitted to the Petitions Committee.

A counter petition is collecting signatures on the Senedd website, calling on the Welsh Government to support the current proposed plans to build a new Velindre Cancer Centre at Whitchurch, Cardiff. It states; ‘the current plan will ensure that Velindre Cancer Centre continues to provide specialist cancer services in a location that is more accessible to patients, with better access from Junction 32 of the M4. It is widely accepted that hospitals set within a natural setting aids patient recovery and lowers the stress levels of families and staff at hospitals’.

The Committee has received written evidence from Velindre University NHS Trust. The Welsh Government has yet to respond to the petitions.

The provision of the new replacement cancer centre in South East Wales is a central focus of the Welsh Government and NHS Wales strategy for Transforming Cancer Services, to help to address the predicted on-going increase in demand for cancer treatment over the next few decades. The Project is one of three projects for the Welsh Government’s Mutual Investment Model (MIM) Programme to support investment in capital infrastructure in Wales. The plans for the new cancer centre have been approved by the local Health Boards in South East Wales and the Welsh Health Specialist Services Committee.

### The Proposed Velindre Cancer Centre

The Velindre University NHS Trust website sets out why a new cancer centre is needed in Wales. It states that; ‘the current 60 year-old Velindre Cancer Centre does not have the facilities or space to meet the needs of the increasing number of people diagnosed with cancer’. The new cancer centre will have the capacity to treat more patients, and will also support international research and development.

The petitioner argues that ‘the proposed Velindre Cancer Centre model is outdated and must be scrutinised’. The petitioner states that ‘the current plan is not in line with best practice for modern joined up cancer care’. The petitioner also highlights the environmental implications of the proposed site.

## The Environment

The new Velindre Cancer Centre is due to open in 2024. Cardiff City Council granted planning permission for the new centre in the Spring of 2018, but there has been opposition to the plans for the new facility. It is due to be built about half a mile north east of the current Velindre cancer centre, referred to locally as the ‘northern meadows’.

The Velindre University NHS Trust state on their [website](#) that ‘sixty per cent of the northern meadows will remain undeveloped’. However, the petitioner states that ‘taking away the northern meadows would be hugely detrimental to physical and mental well-being’. Concerns have been raised over the loss of green space, used by many for walking, and the impact the development will have on the environment. Concerns have also been raised about an increase in traffic in the area.

On their website, Velindre University NHS Trust explain why the new cancer centre must be built on the site of the northern meadows, stating;

The northern meadows was selected because it is NHS owned where the principle of development is already well established and agreed by the council.

(The council has already granted planning permission for housing on the site).

The site’s proximity to the M4 and A470 means that it provides easier access for three quarters of our patients who travel to us from across south East Wales. They will no longer have to travel into the village of Whitchurch.

Thirdly, the site provides the space and quality of outlook which will help our patients and their wellbeing at difficult and anxious times.

In their written response, Velindre University NHS Trust reiterate that Cardiff Council granted planning permission for housing on the site in 2001 and in 2018 it also granted outline planning permission for a new cancer centre. It states ‘the site was selected after reviewing other potential options available in the wider NHS estate’.

The northern meadows site, which is next to Whitchurch hospital, is owned by Cardiff and Vale University Health Board.

## Alternative sites

The petitioner is calling for an independent inquiry into the choice of the site for the Velindre cancer centre, stating that ‘there are viable alternatives’. The Velindre University NHS Trust website includes details of the other sites that were considered, including those referred to by the petitioner;

### **Why can't you build on the existing Whitchurch Hospital site instead of the northern meadows?**

The site is not big enough to achieve the patient experience we are aiming for. The northern meadows site is bigger than the current Velindre Cancer Centre and Whitchurch Hospital sites put together.

It will also improve access to the new Velindre Cancer Centre for three-quarters of our patients who come from areas outside of Cardiff.

The old Whitchurch Hospital is also listed which makes it difficult to redevelop as a modern cancer centre.

In their written evidence, Velindre University NHS Trust explain that they reviewed the possibility of building on the current Whitchurch Hospital site but that it was too small to construct the cancer centre to the required standards (p.11).

Other sites considered included NHS land in Newport and land adjoining the University Hospital of Wales (UHW) in Cardiff, but these were ruled out because the sites were deemed too small to provide what was needed.

The petitioner states that ‘Heath Hospital offered Velindre space alongside Cardiff Uni cancer research in their new build due to start in 2023’. In their written evidence, Velindre University NHS Trust clarify that Cardiff and Vale University Health Board (CVUHB) has not offered the Trust land by the Heath to develop a new cancer centre and there are no confirmed plans for a “new build” starting in 2023. Velindre University NHS Trust state that the site for a new University Hospital of Wales has not yet been agreed (p.11).

## Cancer Services

The Velindre University NHS Trust website’s section on cancer services aims to address some of the issues that are raised by the petitioner, including whether the new cancer centre should be built on the site of a larger acute hospital;

### **Shouldn't the new cancer centre be built on the site of a larger acute hospital?**

No. We considered these options with our staff, partners and patients and concluded that the proposals we are now pursuing work best for us all.

Velindre provides a regional service, supporting patients from across south east Wales. Our staff already work closely with, and on, a number of hospital sites and will do so more in future.

The model for the way we provide services is modern and fits with the lessons of COVID-19 which show that there should be an appropriate separation between acute and elective care.

It also aligns with the Welsh Government's plan for health and social care in Wales. "A Healthier Wales", published October 2019, sees large general hospitals in future supporting the delivery of specialist services across networks of hospitals and centres of excellence. Our plan for a new cancer centre of excellence, on its own site, and part of the Cancer Services Network, is in line with this policy.

Our plan also reflects the reality that there is no existing hospital site which has the space to hold eight specialist radiotherapy machines.

Further details are provided on the number of ambulance journeys from the current centre, and how access to acute services off site can be accessed quickly and safely.

The written evidence submitted by Velindre University NHS Trust outlines the engagement work it has undertaken with clinicians and patients in support of its clinical model. Velindre University NHS Trust insist that their approach has the support of the health boards and their clinicians from across the region, emphasising it has been subject to scrutiny and independent review.

A recent BBC Wales article (published on 8 September 2020) refers to a letter, signed by fifty-seven cancer experts, that has been sent to the Minister for Health and Social Services outlining concerns for patient safety at the new Velindre cancer centre. The letter has yet to be published. However, the BBC articles states that 'the Minister has responded to the letter confirming that the Velindre Trust would seek independent advice on the clinical model for the new cancer hospital'. It goes on to say 'the chief medical officer is also discussing the management of acutely unwell cancer patients with health board medical directors to ensure that current model of delivery is fit for purpose'.

The petitioner provides a link to the Mount Vernon Report, stating that the development of the new Velindre cancer centre should learn from the clinical advisory panel review and recommendations. NHS England commissioned an urgent review of Mount Vernon Cancer Centre (MVCC) in May 2019, led by the East of England Specialised Commissioning Team, due to

increasing concern regarding the sustainability of a safe and high quality oncology service provided at the site. Velindre University NHS Trust state;

The Velindre Cancer Centre is very different to Mount Vernon in terms of its geography, population and workforce challenges as well as collaborative working arrangements

Velindre has not faced the same challenges regarding recruitment and retention of staff and the resulting impact on training. Our network of services with the three health boards in south east Wales give us a strong regional focus for our services.

We have considered the lessons learnt from the Mount Vernon report around the management of unwell patients and, as a result, we are refining our current service....

## Recent developments

Following outline planning permission for a cancer centre on the northern meadows site, two further planning applications have been submitted to Cardiff City Council to revise access roads to the new Velindre Cancer Centre. Asda supermarket had raised concerns over traffic congestion but the supermarket has since worked with the Trust to resolve those issues. In their written evidence, Velindre University NHS Trust say that the planning application to revise the access roads will reduce overall costs and bring forward the opening date.

(The petitioner refers to £30 million that 'would be spent on roads alone to access the land on which the new centre is proposed'. Velindre University NHS Trust state that the figure of £26.9 million to deliver these roads, includes the cost of enabling works for the site, not just roads).

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.