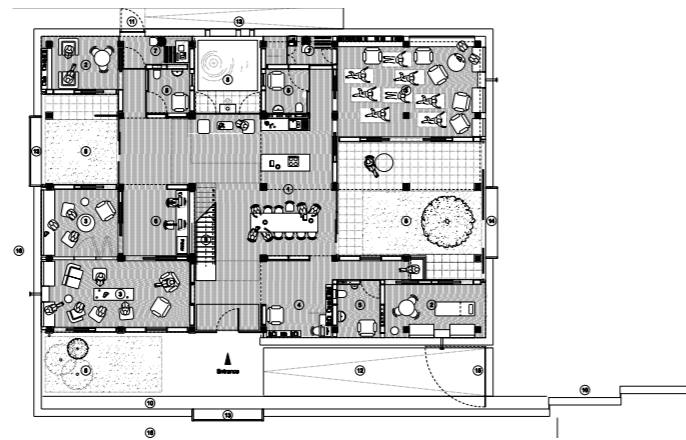


The London Maggie's Centre needed to create its own sequence of internal and external environments cocooned from its surroundings – a welcoming beacon in this busy London streetscape.



The design concept for Maggie's London is based on an embrace; an arm, or enclosure that gradually envelops visitors as they move towards the kitchen at the heart of the building.

Maggie's London is located on a site in the grounds of Charing Cross Hospital and at the junction of Fulham Palace Road and St Dunstan's Road. The building complements and contrasts with the main hospital building. It is a non-institutional facility which offers visitors an 'open house' across one-and-a-half floors and covering 370 sq m. However, it offers something more welcoming, more comfortable, more thought-provoking and more uplifting which provides support for patients, family members or friends.

The concept for Maggie's London is clear and straightforward in its execution; there is surprising spatial complexity revealed in its resultant volume and form, played within this rigorous arrangement. The emphasis is on creating a particular sequence of spaces which allow visitors to be cut off from the outside world while, at the same time, allowing them occasional, selective glimpses of everyday life outside and along the Fulham Palace Road.

The building's key architectural 'feature' is a 'floating' roof which oversails the outer wall. The roof is punctuated by a distinctive series of openings, many of which are visible from street level. These unglazed rooflights allow natural light, wind and rain into the garden areas below, whilst shading the facades beneath. Low iron glass with a high level of transparency has been used where the roof meets the building to enhance the impression of a floating structure. The roof design was conceived to limit visitors' views of the neighbouring hospital, focusing these instead on the surrounding trees and landscaping.

Landscaping is a fundamental component of any Maggie's Centre, but is particularly important in Maggie's London given the relatively harsh physical nature of the surrounding urban environment. The three key external garden areas – the northern, eastern and southern winter gardens – are effectively treated as extensions of the internal areas, even though they are open to the elements. All areas of the ground floor – which has underfloor heating – are accessible to visitors, who are encouraged to find their own space in the building.



The mezzanine level contains office spaces and four terraces with wooden decking, benches and planters. This level creates space where staff can work but still continue to be in contact with visitors below because of the openness of the building's design.

High quality acoustics are key to creating an attractive environment for staff and visitors alike. High external walls protect the inner space from the relentless daytime noise and visual distractions of Fulham Palace Road both on the ground and mezzanine levels. The design allows people using the Centre to be aware of life going on around them while still maintaining their personal privacy. Reverberation within the double-height volumes is reduced by carpets and furnishings, while personal discussion spaces are located at the edges of the building and slightly segregated from the other space.

The building is naturally ventilated (using cross ventilation) and each room opens onto an internal garden space. All timber used in the design is from sustainable sources and rainwater – collected from the roof – is stored and reused for the irrigation of the landscaped areas. The glass facades are shaded from solar gain and the building's high level of insulation greatly reduces heat loss from within.

Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners have created a welcoming, thought-provoking and uplifting building.

maggie's

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