

**AMO's Comment
on the Heritage Impact Assessment
on the Heritage Site of The Fringe Club, South Block,
Old Dairy Farm Depot, 2 Lower Albert Road, Central**

In response to HKFF's initial Heritage Impact Assessment Report (the HIA Report) for Fringe Club of March 2010, AMO has reviewed the findings and offered the following comments on the major issues for HKFF's consideration :

- (a) Alteration works that would disturb the building fabric normally will not be recommended unless they are a must for the safety of the building users and there is no other alternative. This heritage conservation aspect is particularly important in the case of Fringe Club, given the heritage significance of the building as a Grade 1 historic building. That being said, the lowering of floor slab at the existing Fringe Gallery could be favourably considered in view of the need for sufficient headroom for a theatre and the slab being comparatively less featured. Nonetheless, the AP and RSE shall demonstrate that the brick walls and the structure will not be adversely affected during the excavation and construction (item 3(j) of Annex B);
- (b) It is understood that the addition of staircase to the roof at Building 2 is to enhance the building safety and therefore should be favourably considered. Nonetheless, the visual impact assessment of the new staircase on the roof should be included in the HIA Report to have a comprehensive assessment of its impact (item 3(a) of Annex B);
- (c) The central columns on the G/F and 1/F together with the internal wall buttress columns and connecting beams are historically the integral parts of the structure and their removal means that the integrity of the architectural style at that period will be undermined. This is undesirable as they represent a historic episode in the building's life and therefore have their value for retention. In addition, the proposed removal of the central columns on G/F and 1/F would involve large scale of consequential strengthening works including insertion of new beams and modification to the existing beams. The proposed works are irreversible as the entire structural form would have been changed once the columns are removed and new beams are inserted. As a

result, the proposed removal of central columns should be reconsidered or acceptable alternatives for the consequential strengthening works should be explored (items 3(j) and (l) of Annex B);

- (d) The full extent of the proposed renovation works should be highlighted on plans and be compared with the existing layout such that the alterations can be readily identified;
- (e) As strengthening to the roof at Building 2 is not part of the Compliance Works, the necessity for the proposed strengthening should be reassessed having regard to the disturbance to the existing fabric of the building it could cause (item 3(k) of Annex B);
- (f) The original assessment of the potential impact of a number of the proposed works items, including the strengthening to the roof at Building 2, the addition of staircase to roof, the demolition of columns and the lowering of ground floor slab, etc., should be further reviewed in the light of the above comments. AMO is concerned that the proposed conversion works might involve irreversible disturbance to historic fabrics and alternatives should be worked out. AMO has suggested that HKFF should review the scope of these conversion works with a view to minimising the proposed structural intervention to the historic building and identifying appropriate mitigation measures; and
- (g) The details of the proposed compliance works to the roof parapet are yet to be provided (item 3(f) of Annex B).

Antiquities and Monuments Office
Leisure and Cultural Services Department

April 2010

Ref.: LCS AM 22/3