

**Heritage Impact Assessment
for Transformation of the Former Police Married Quarters Site
on Hollywood Road into a Creative Industries Landmark**

BACKGROUND

1. The proposal by the Musketeers Education and Culture Charitable Foundation Limited (“Musketeers Education”), which aims to create a new creative industries landmark in Hong Kong, is considered to be most capable of meeting the project objectives of conserving the heritage site, transforming it into a creative industries landmark and providing landscaped open space for the neighbourhood. It focuses on the design sector, which cuts across various creative industries, and targets at providing a platform for displaying products by designers and create-preneurs and providing a retail outlet for them. For the promotion of creative industries and the implementation of the business strategy to transform the Site into an iconic landmark, the project will provide studios for retailing creative products, an indoor multi-functional activity hall, semi-covered events space, a creative resources centre, rooms for designers-in-residence, an underground interpretation area for displaying the remains of the Former Central School, landscaped open area and other complementary commercial facilities such as food and beverage facilities.

2. The Architectural Services Department (ArchSD) will carry out the revitalisation works for the selected proposal under the Public Works Programme.

STATEMENT OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

3. The Former Police Married Quarters Site (PMQ), located at 35 Aberdeen Street, is bounded by four streets, namely Hollywood Road, Aberdeen Street, Staunton Street and Shing Wong Street. It was the site of the Former Central School, which was originally located at Gough Street before it was moved to the current site for a larger campus. It was renamed as Victoria College when it was moved to this site with construction works completed in 1889. It was renamed as Queen’s College in 1894. The Queen’s College subsequently moved to its present site in Causeway Bay in 1950. The school building on Hollywood Road was damaged seriously during the Second World War. It was subsequently demolished to make way for the construction of the existing Police Married Quarters, which was completed in 1951. The site consists of four plateaux formed by rubble retaining walls and three buildings, namely Block A and Block B, which were the staff quarters, and a recreation centre which was subsequently converted into the Junior Police Call Club House (JPC Building). The three buildings are made of reinforced concrete. Block A and Block B are 8-storey and 7-storey high respectively, and the JPC Building is 2-storey high. These three buildings at the PMQ site were accorded a Grade 3 status by the

Antiquities Advisory Board in November 2010. The remnants of the Former Central School within and around the PMQ site have been listed by the Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO) as a Site of Archaeological Interest.

a. Contextual Significance

4. The heritage site represents the early development of the Sheung Wan and western Central areas since the mid-19th century. Shing Wong Temple (城隍廟), a “City Temple”, was built in 1843 by the Chinese to worship the God of the City on the heritage site and it was developed into fifty houses, namely Rangel’s Estate, in 1852. In 1918, an underground public latrine¹ was built outside the southeast corner of the site when it was occupied by the Former Central School. Together with other surrounding built heritage, such as Man Mo Temple, Kwong Fuk Tze, the Central Police Station Compound, the Central Market, Tung Wah Hospital, etc, this cluster of historic buildings reflect the early settlement of the Chinese community in the Sheung Wan and western Central areas.

b. Historic and Social Significance

5. It was the home of the Former Central School, which was originally established in 1862 at Gough Street and subsequently moved to this site in 1889. The Former Central School was the first government school to provide upper primary and secondary Western education to the public, marking a new phase in the development of public education in Hong Kong. Physical remains of the Former Central School at the PMQ Site above ground and underground can still be found at the site. These remains are important vestiges to understand the layout design and the history of the first government school.

6. The Former Central School at the PMQ site was demolished in 1951 to make way for the construction of the Police Married Quarters. The influx of Chinese refugees and social unrest during the 1950s to 60s led to a substantial demand for local Chinese police officers and, hence the need to improve their staff benefits. The construction of this first police married quarters to provide accommodation for married junior police officers, including Chinese police officers marks the introduction of staff benefits for the police force in the post-war period in response to the changing social environment in Hong Kong. The construction of these three historic buildings thus carries interest in the local history of Hong Kong and social value to the community.

¹ The public latrine is currently without a historic grading. It is a new item proposed by the public for AAB to consider whether it warrants grading.

c. Architectural and Aesthetic Significance

7. The three buildings were designed by the Architectural Office of the Public Works Department in a 4-plateaux setting. The two linear quarters blocks, with an open central courtyard in-between, were constructed on the 2nd plateau on the site formation of the Former Central School, and a recreation centre (the JPC Building) was located on the 4th plateau. The quarters blocks and the JPC Building are connected by external flights of granite steps and surrounded by the rubble retaining walls, which are remnants of the Former Central School.

8. Architecturally, the three buildings are of some merits as they are good examples of post-war modern architecture commonly found in the 1950s. The two quarters blocks provided 140 single units and 28 double units over seven floors with other types of supporting space. The two-storey high recreation centre underwent several changes in use and became the JPC Building in 1974. Externally, the two linear quarters blocks exhibit all the typical features of modern architecture, namely painted walls, flat roofs, metal-framed windows, round porthole windows, and long horizontal balconies on each floor. The JPC Building also features painted walls, a flat roof, metal-framed windows, with a cantilevered balcony on the first floor and a canopy over the main entrance.

9. It has been said that the three buildings were a good example of the functional and pragmatic approach for designing Government buildings at that time. Although they may not be aesthetically appealing, there are few police married quarters for rank and file officers of this style and age in Hong Kong. While its condition has deteriorated over the years, the exterior of the buildings retains an authentic appearance. The authenticity of the layout of the buildings is also generally maintained. As police married quarters for rank and file officers of the 1950s, the buildings have some built heritage value.

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

In accordance with the Development Bureau Technical Circular (Works) No.6/2009 and AMO's Guidance Note to Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) Submission, AMO considered that a HIA is required to examine to what extent the proposed works would affect the historic buildings and the underground remains and if adverse impact is unavoidable, to devise mitigation measures based on AMO's Conservation Guidelines provided in the Resource Kit of the Invitation For Proposals (IFP).



Proposed Elevation of “PMQ” facing Hollywood Road

a. Conservation Principles to conserve the cultural significance of PMQ

The recommended Conservation Principles for devising and implementing any necessary mitigation measures to preserve and interpret the history of PMQ are as set out below:

1. Architectural design should be carried out in such a way as to keep the original expression of the architectural features and minimise interference with the existing building fabrics. Character defining elements should be preserved or restored, such as:
 - a) the features of the Former Central School surrounding the 4 plateaux, including rubble retaining walls, granite coping, dressed quoin stone,

granite plinths of posts, granite gate-post and steps and flights of granite steps, will be preserved.

- b) The former entrances of the Former Central School will be restored.
- 2. Any new elements required to be constructed for providing sufficient facilities for the revitalised site should be understated in design, and should be compatible to but distinguishable from the original fabric. They will be introduced either in a reversible manner or with minimised visual impact on the façades. The corresponding mitigation measures for the additions/conversion works are illustrated in paragraph d below.
- 3. The existing buildings, site elements and the underground public latrine would be recorded by cartographic and photographic surveys. Any necessary alteration and addition works to PMQ will be recorded. These surveys and records will be documented, archived and made available for future users or professional personnel for interpretation purpose and future reference.
- 4. Routine monitoring and maintenance to be carried out in future will follow the principles laid down in the HIA.

b. Key Design Proposals

1. Conservation, adaptive re-use and upgrading of existing buildings

The three existing historic buildings in the site, including the two quarters blocks (Block A and Block B) and the JPC Building, will be properly conserved and adaptively re-used. The conserved buildings will also be upgraded as necessary to meet modern standards and requirements. The original residential units on the G/F and the 1/F will be converted into studios/shops, while those on the 2/F and above will be turned into studios/offices for the creative industries and ancillary facilities, including six lodgings for visiting designers. The existing JPC Building will be converted for restaurant use.

2. Addition of Underground Interpretation Area (UIA)

An underground interpretation area will be provided beneath the courtyard for the display and public appreciation of the remnants of the Former Central School and the history of the PMQ Site. The proposed location of the UIA is considered optimal for displaying as many as possible those underground remnants of the Former Central School which have already been investigated for public appreciation while minimising the impact on the site.

3. Provision of the required new facilities for the creative industries landmark

(a) Construction of the “I-Cube”

A double volume, fully enclosed function hall for public events, referred to as the “I-Cube”, will be added between Block A and Block B above the courtyard to connect the two blocks at the 2/F level. A landscaped roof will be provided at the top of “I-Cube” (i.e. 4/F) for the enjoyment of the occupants and the public.

(b) Modification of the top floor of Block B into a roof-top restaurant with high headroom

The top floor of Block B will be modified into a high-headroom roof-top restaurant with a mezzanine floor to accommodate a wider range of possible activities and events. This will involve alteration and addition works to the internal structural elements/partition walls while maintaining the integrity of the elevation of the building. The new roof-top restaurant will be constructed inside the preserved façade and set back from the elevation so as to preserve the integrity of the existing façade and minimise the additional loading onto the building.

(c) Addition of canopy above the courtyard

A glass canopy will be added at 6/F between Block A and Block B above the courtyard to create a weather-proof outdoor space for holding large events and public enjoyment.

4. Enhancement works for facilitating public use of the site

(a) Addition of an external lift tower

An external lift tower will be built in front of Block B facing Hollywood Road to connect the building and the lower playground on the 4th plateau.

(b) Construction of a block for a transformer room/ sprinkler tanks/a fire services tank

A new block for accommodating a transformer room, sprinkler tanks and a fire services tank is proposed to be built at the south-east corner of the site, at the junction between Staunton Street and Aberdeen Street, in front of the exterior of the underground public latrine. This has the

benefit of avoiding loading these heavy support facilities onto the conserved historic building blocks.

(c) Decking over of one of the entrances of the underground public latrine

To provide a pedestrian passage along Aberdeen Street towards the PMQ, one of the two entrances of the underground public latrine will be decked over and the other entrance at Staunton Street will be retained and restored (details are set out in paragraph d4(c) below).

c. Mitigation Measures to the Conversion Works

For areas where possible impact of the conversion works could not be avoided, we have devised the following mitigation measures based on the above-mentioned Conservation Principles.

1. Conservation and adaptive re-use of existing buildings

- (a) The structural support of any necessary new additions to these buildings, including staircases, platforms for use by the disabled, passenger lifts, footbridges and the glass canopy, will be kept to the minimum size possible so as to avoid overwhelming the interior and the main façades.

2. Addition of Underground Interpretation Area (UIA)

- (a) A larger display area with more varieties of foundation remains (such as Foundations No. 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11 and some red brick structures) was considered necessary. Therefore, the current UIA scheme (i.e. a larger scale of 230m² with more variety of structural features to be displayed) is proposed.
- (b) Due to the construction of the UIA where the potential impact on the underground foundation remains has been identified, an archaeological investigation has been recommended to be implemented prior to construction in accordance with an action plan to be submitted by the works agency for endorsement by AMO for the areas concerned so as to preserve the impacted, undisturbed and unexcavated areas with archaeological interest as appropriate.
- (c) The construction of the access to the UIA will potentially impact on three small discrete areas with underground foundation remains. However, while the extant remains within two of the impacted areas are considered small-scale (i.e. parts of Foundation No. 9), the remaining one with mortar wall (i.e. northern part of Foundation No. 3) has been

seriously disturbed by previous development. Therefore, the impact is considered acceptable with appropriate mitigation measures.

- (d) We will collect and properly store as much of the impacted remains as practicable to cater for future replacement. Adjacent remains that may be indirectly impacted will be well protected before adding new materials onto them.
- (e) Full documentation (including photographic and video recording) will be carried out prior to, during and upon completion of the works at the impacted area for future interpretation of the history of the site.

3. Provision of the required new facilities for the creative industries

(a) Construction of the “I-Cube”

- The supporting structure of the “I-Cube” will be on the two sides of the “I-Cube” as far as practicable so as to provide a column-free space in the middle of the courtyard. The “I-Cube” will be a structurally independent construction without affecting the structural stability of the existing building blocks.
- The “I-Cube” will be located away from the main entrance at Aberdeen Street and will be as close to the 3rd plateau as practicable so as to minimise the visual impact on the existing buildings.
- For the impact on the underground remains, the pile caps and the tie beams for the I-Cube will be located on the 2nd plateau and the 3rd plateau. Except the proposed pile caps TTA4 and TTA7, no foundation remains were reported to have been found at the locations of the remaining pile caps and tie beams and therefore no impact is anticipated.
- Nevertheless, granite slab and No. 12 foundation remains identified by AMO in 2007 were revealed in pile caps TTA4 and TTA7 respectively. The potential impact due to the construction of these pile caps may be a concern, but the impact is considered acceptable as advised by AMO. We will carry out works with an archaeological watching brief for proper recording with a view to preserving the impacted granite slab at TTA4 by record. We will also ensure that works will be carried at a precise location of TTA7 which should avoid any disturbance to No. 12 foundation remains.

(b) Modification of the top floor of Block B into a high head-room roof-top restaurant

- The existing elevations of the top floor facing Hollywood Road and the courtyard will be retained in principle so as to maintain the integrity of the façades, which feature the horizontality and the rhythm of solid and void.
- The new architecture for the roof-top restaurant will be constructed inside the preserved façade. It will be set back from elevation and finished by glass enclosure, with a different appearance from the existing building. It will not replicate the existing building fabric and architecture in order to properly reflect the history of the site for future interpretation. The glass enclosure will be of light weight construction in order to minimise the structural impact on the existing building.

(c) Addition of canopy above the courtyard

- The canopy will be constructed of glass, which allows natural light to flow to the area underneath and will not affect appreciation of the building elevations.
- Fixing details and the structure of the canopy will be light-weight construction as far as practicable, without any extensive structural members dominating the elevation of the existing blocks.

4. Enhancement works for facilitating public use of the site

(a) Addition of an external lift tower

- The lift tower and its foundation will be positioned away from the existing historic fabrics, including the retaining wall and the flight of granite steps.

(b) Construction of a block to accommodate a transformer room/ sprinkler tanks/a fire services tank

- The block to be constructed will be an independent structure and introduced in a reversible manner so that it could be removed in future without damaging the brick wall of the underground public latrine.

- The works will make use of existing openings on the brick wall of the underground public latrine for running the new utilities. Historic fabrics will be salvaged and stored properly for probable future restoration.
- Photographic records of the elevation of the red brick wall of the underground public latrine prior to construction works will be provided in the vicinity of the impacted area for public appreciation of its original visual features.

(c) Decking over of one of the entrances of the underground public latrine

- Detailed photographic and cartographic surveys will be properly carried out prior to, during and upon completion of the works at the impacted area with a view to preserving the impacted parapet wall at Aberdeen Street by record.
- The parapet wall at Aberdeen Street to be removed for public safety reason will be salvaged and stored properly for future restoration, if necessary. The other entrance at Staunton Street will be retained, repaired and restored.

The HIA concluded with the observation that the proposal will meet its primary objectives of properly preserving the three historic existing buildings and the remnants of the Former Central School at the PMQ site while providing sufficient facilities for a creative industries landmark through revitalisation.

Architectural Services Department
March 2011
