

**Heritage Impact Assessment
For Revitalisation of the Blue House Cluster
at Nos. 72-74A Stone Nullah Lane, Nos. 2-8 Hing Wan Street
and No.8 King Sing Street in Wan Chai**

BACKGROUND

Under the Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme (Revitalisation Scheme) Batch II launched in 2009, the Secretary for Development approved in principle in 2010 the proposal to adaptively reuse the Blue House Cluster (BHC) into “Viva Blue House” (VBH) project submitted by St. James’ Settlement (SJS). Government funding for capital works will be sought for this project. The VBH project will be self-sustainable financially in revitalizing the historic shop houses (Chinese tenement houses) into a living heritage of urban village.

2. The BHC comprises three groups of historic shop houses of three or four-storey, namely 72-74A Stone Nullah Lane (Blue House), 2-8 Hing Wan Street (Yellow House) and 8 King Sing Street (Orange House), and a public open space. The buildings were constructed between 1920s and 1950s. Over the years, the BHC had housed “Wah To Temple”, a martial arts school and an English school. It now accommodates an osteopathy clinic and eight residential units. The open space located between the buildings is vacant lots left behind after the demolition of three shop houses which were built in the early 1930s.

3. The BHC is a testimonial of the typical configuration of Chinese tenement houses in Hong Kong in the early 20th century, with shops on the ground floor and residential flats on upper floors. In recognition of their heritage value, AAB accorded Grade 1 status to the Blue House, Grade 3 status to the Yellow House and no grading to the Orange House.

**HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT (HIA) / CONSERVATION
MANAGEMENT PLAN (CMP)**

4. In accordance with the Development Bureau Technical Circular (Works) No.6/2009 regarding the HIA mechanism introduced by Development Bureau (DEVB) and the Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO)’s Guidance Note to HIA Submission for Revitalisation Scheme, AMO considered that an

HIA is required to be carried out for the BHC with the objective of drawing up a CMP. The CMP sets out mitigation measures to avoid adverse impact on the buildings in the course of conversion and to outline the future interpretation, maintenance and management strategies, based on AMO's Conservation Guidelines given in the Resource Kit of the Revitalisation Scheme. The HIA has been completed and submitted to AMO.

A. Project Proposal

5. The revitalisation of the BHC adopts a new approach which emphasizes preservation of the historic buildings as well as the local community network. The tenants who opted to stay in the BHC, the community network, and other intangible cultural elements are key elements in the preservation and revitalisation of the BHC. Rather than focusing primarily on building preservation, more of VBH is about the activities which promote and sustain the local network and culture.

6. VBH is a project of conserving our living heritage and it integrates living tangible and intangible heritage preservation. It revitalizes the BHC into a multi-functional services complex inheriting wisdom and traditional ways of living. It has five core elements:

- House of Stories;
- Existing Resident Housing and Engagement Unit;
- Good Neighbour Scheme for New Tenants;
- Social Enterprise Units (Dessert House and Vegetarian Restaurant); and
- Community Oriented Mutual Economy Hall.

B. Conservation Principles and Mitigation Measures

7. With reference to the CMP, the recommended Conservation Principles for mitigation measures to protect the BHC and for strategies to maintain and interpret the BHC are as below:

- (a) The main conservation approach and treatment to the BHC is restoration and repair to the preserved building fabrics. Alteration and addition should be carried out in such a way to keep the original expression of the architectural features and

minimize intervention to existing fabrics. Character-defining elements should be preserved or restored, such as:

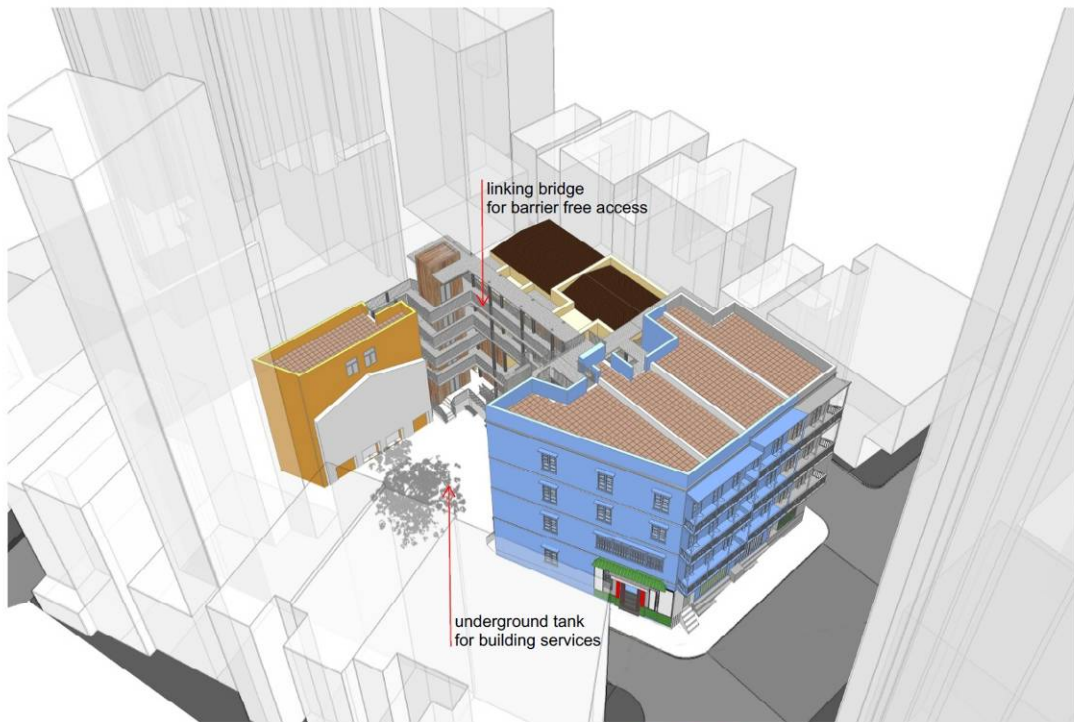
- i. the façades, including the balconies with decorative ironwork railings and concrete brackets, horizontal bands and mouldings, original shop fronts and traditional shop signs, timber French doors and windows;
 - ii. the roof at Yellow House in traditional timber roof with Chinese roof tiles; and
 - iii. interior elements that give characters of typical shop houses, including two existing flat units (2/F of No. 74 Blue House & 3/F of Orange House) with its interior layout and setting, timber floors and joists, timber staircases with wooden panels and original floor tiles, will be preserved;
- (b) New additions and elements required for complying with building safety codes and meeting functional requirements should be understated in design, and compatible with but distinguishable from the original fabric. Architectural design should be carried out in such a way to keep the original expression of the architectural features and minimize intervention to existing fabrics. They will be introduced at either reversible method or with minimum visual impact to the major façades, such as:
- i. One set of light-weighted steel link bridges with three fire escape staircases connecting the rear elevations of the buildings for providing fire exit and barrier free access to each upper floor unit;
 - ii. One lift attached to the link bridge for barrier free access for the disabled, to be added next to the back of Orange House with machine-room-less design to minimize the height of the lift shaft;
 - iii. Underground new fire service water tank and pump room

to be located in the middle of the open space for improved fire safety provision; and

- iv. A new feature wall to be built next to the side elevation (party wall) of Orange House, as new landscape element for outdoor communal activities including outdoor movie show.
- (c) A number of heritage interpretation areas will be introduced in the restored BHC including two ground floor shops to be adapted for Wan Chai Livelihood Places for public visit, two residential units on upper floors (2/F of No. 74 Blue House and 3/F of Orange House) with their original interior layouts and setting to be preserved on site for guided group visit by appointment, and one residential unit at 2/F of No.72 Blue House to be retained for group visit and communal activities. These spaces will be designed as heritage exhibition area with display objects, memorabilia, old photographs, artifacts and interpretative panels for public appreciation. Daily guided tours, weekly cultural seminar or small performance, monthly air fair, communal movie show, traditional craft workshops and training courses, and other art and cultural events will be organized by SJS to promote public interest in local heritage and cultural activities.
- (d) Other measures including on-site structural monitoring system to ensure the historic building's structural integrity, cartographic and photographic surveys to properly record the historic building before and after alteration, and routine monitoring and maintenance in the operation stage will be carried out.

THE WAY FORWARD

8. SJS will ensure all works carried out for heritage conservation are to strictly comply with the requirements stipulated in the CMP as endorsed by AMO.



建築群效果圖 Exterior View

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公共空間(庭園) Artist Impression (Courtyard)

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