

**Heritage Impact Assessment for the Conversion
of the Former Central Government Offices
(Main Wing and East Wing) in Central
into Offices of the Department of Justice**

BACKGROUND

As announced by the Chief Executive under the “Conserving Central” initiative in his 2009-10 Policy Address, the Main Wing and East Wing of the Former Central Government Offices (CGO) will be preserved for use by the Department of Justice (DoJ) after the relocation of the bureaux to the new Central Government Complex in Tamar.

2. The East and Main Wings were completed in 1954 and 1956 respectively. The offices were officially opened on 9 January 1957 by the then Governor Sir Alexander Grantham. The commemorative plaque still exists in the lobby area of the Main Wing. The Main Wing and East Wing were used as government offices for nearly 60 years until late 2011. The location plan of the Former CGO is shown in Figure 1.

3. In 2009, Purcell Miller Tritton LLP (PMT) was commissioned to carry out a historic and architectural appraisal to assess the heritage values of the whole complex. The report concluded that the East and Main Wings are architecturally and historically significant and should be converted to some beneficial use that is appropriate with the previous Government use. Although the buildings are neither declared as a monument nor graded as an historic building/site, they will probably be accorded with grading in future in the light of their heritage value as revealed by the PMT study.

STATEMENT OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

4. The Former CGO was constructed in 1950s to replace the Old Government Secretariat Building which was built in 1847. The whole site consists of three buildings namely the East Wing, the Main Wing and the West Wing. The East Wing and the Main Wing were linked together to form a T-shaped structure in which they are inter-connected on each floor.

A. Historic and Social Significance

5. The Main Wing and East Wing symbolise the highest central government power of Hong Kong since colonial times. Many influential policies and decisions contributing to the development of Hong Kong were made in the Main Wing and East Wing.

B. Architectural and Aesthetic Significance

6. The Main Wing and East Wing are one of the earliest examples of modern architecture to reflect the modern movement in post-war Hong Kong. The building height is carefully designed in low-lying level to preserve the landscape of the north island slope.

7. The Main Wing and East Wing were designed in modern utilitarian style by government architects from the Public Works Department. The buildings were designed mainly on a functional basis. The exposed concrete frame design and the standard Crittal style steel frame windows not only reduce any unnecessary decorations on the surface, but also allow maximum natural sunlight and ventilation into the internal spaces. The broad use of granite block cladding surfaces with dragon head and geometric ornamental pattern crafts in the East Wing shows the influence of the Art Deco style with local elements.

8. Although the Main Wing and East Wing have undergone numerous additions and alterations, the buildings have been served as government offices since their completions and much of their exterior features are intact and in their original building design.

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT (HIA)

9. In accordance with Development Bureau Technical Circular (Works) No. 06/2009 and Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO)'s Guidance Note to HIA Submission, an HIA is carried out to examine the impact of the proposed works on

the Former Central Government Offices (Main and East Wings) and to devise mitigation measures if adverse impact is unavoidable.

A. Conservation Principles to conserve the cultural significance of the Former CGO (Main and East Wings)

10. The recommended Conservation Principles for devising and implementing necessary mitigation measures to conserve and interpret the Main Wing and East Wing of the Former CGO are as follows-

a) Building Fabrics

- (i) The key character defining elements (CDEs) identified should be preserved or repaired with minimum intervention.

The CDEs which should be preserved or repaired include -

EXTERIOR

- The original design of all their elevations including their exposed white concrete frame design, the finely dresses granite cladding surfaces and the universal design of steel frame windows and security grilles.
- All ornamental decorated entrances for officials and the public located in the buildings including their granite porch and covered canopies, the entrance gates, steps, emblems and original building names affixed on walls.
- The covered car park area under the East Wing including the supporting columns, granite base and footing, square patterned moulding on ceiling and the two granite porch entrances leading into the buildings.
- The overall flat roof design and the mono-pitched roof on the west transitional section of the East Wing.

INTERIOR

- Rooms and areas designed with special functional use with historic interest including the Executive Council (ExCo) Chamber and the marble staircase connecting with the main entrance lobby.
 - Rooms and areas with special connection to the public through media such as the double height press hall in the annex block and the small press room on G/F of the Main Wing with old fittings.
 - Rooms and areas with old fittings and setting such as the conference room in Room 150 of the East Wing, the original escape staircase and the lift lobby with terrazzo finish wall decors in the east double square tower block of the East Wing, and the spiral escape staircase with an octagonal landing in the Main Wing.
 - The commemorative plaque in the entrance lobby of the Main Wing and the marble time capsule.
- (ii) Alteration to identified original building fabrics should be kept to the minimum. Any new additional works should be properly placed to minimise physical damage and visual impact. New elements should be of compatible design and distinguishable from the existing building fabrics.

b) Building Services

- (i) The exposed building facilities on roof surface will be removed and replaced with new equipment in an orderly manner, as well as tidied up and covered to reduce visual impact. Green roof will be erected on the roof surface.
- (ii) Plant rooms and service ducting currently located outside the buildings and on the exterior surface facing public streets will be replaced with new ducting in an orderly manner.

- (iii) The existing plant rooms and pipe ducts inside the buildings will be utilised as far as possible to minimise excessive intervention to the buildings setting.
- (iv) Part of the G/F windows on the east elevation of the Main Wing will be modified to provide access for the fire services installations and the final discharge of the Means of Escape.

c) Documentation and Monitoring

- (i) Cartographic and photographic surveys to record the building will be conducted before the conversion works. Monitoring checks and surveys will also be conducted during the construction period. A set of record drawings will be prepared and furnished to AMO after the conversion works.
- (ii) Any renovation and maintenance works during the conversion and in future operation should be properly documented for record and should follow the principles laid down in the HIA report.

B. Key Design Proposals

11. The key proposed works for conservation and conversion, as well as enhancements for facilitating future office use by DoJ are listed as follows -

(a) Project Scope

- The project is going to renovate and enhance the existing Main and East Wings to accommodate the offices of DoJ. Proposed floor plans are at Figures 2 to 11.
- The project is going to design and accommodate special function rooms and supporting facilities for new building users, such as conference rooms, a multi-purpose conference hall (existing press room on 1/F of the annex block), a main lobby (existing main lobby on G/F of the Main Wing), a library (part of 1/F of the East Wing incorporated with the

conference room in Room 150) and mini-libraries in divisions, a multi-purpose room for staff (north of the ExCo chamber on 1/F of the Main Wing), building management offices and a guard house, car parking spaces and other office supporting facilities.

(b) Conservation and Conversion Works of the Main and East Wings into DoJ Offices

(i) Exterior

- No alteration works will be carried out on the exterior structure. General repairs will be carried out on identified areas if necessary.
- The existing window-type air conditioners will be removed and the respective steel windows will be replaced with new ones to match with the existing windows.
- The preservation strategies for different elements of the main façade and the proposed works to enhance the visual values of the main façade are illustrated in Figures 12 and 13 respectively.

(ii) Interior

- The interior will be used by DoJ as offices. Only internal office layout alterations and re-fitting out works will be conducted.

(iii) Roof Level

- The building facilities will be replaced with new set of facilities in an orderly manner and properly screened to reduce the visual impact.
- Green roof and install non-reflective solar panels will be erected to enhance greenery space and improve the building environment. The new design will preserve the flat roof setting and will not impose excessive loading to the roof surface.
- The proposed new green roof and platform to increase the green area of the CGO is demonstrated in Figure 14.

(iv) Preserved Features for Heritage Interpretation

Those features of the Main Wing and the East Wing which will be preserved for heritage interpretation are set out below:

- The main entrance areas on the west elevation of the Main Wing and at the east elevation of the East Wing facing Garden Road respectively;
- The internal layout and furniture of the ExCo Chamber and the main staircase connecting with the main entrance in 1/F of the Main Wing;
- As far as possible the double height layout of the press hall on 1/F of the annex block and the internal setting of the small press room on G/F of the Main Wing;
- The internal layout and fittings of the conference room (existing Room 150 of the East Wing) to be incorporated into the reading corner of the future library;
- The commemorative plaque and time capsule in the Main Wing;
- Existing terrazzo wall finishes found in the public lift lobby and the escape staircase of the East Wing; and

There will be public access to designated internal areas through a designated heritage route in scheduled open days.

(v) External Area

- Greenery areas will be increased along the site boundary subject to the approval of relevant departments. Existing tall trees and recorded Old Valuable Trees will be retained.
- The existing high metal ornamental fence along the DoJ site boundary along Lower Albert Road will be replaced by a lower fence with compatible design.

- The high metal ornamental fence along the boundary of the northern slope and facing St John Cathedral will be preserved for public safety reason.

(c) Enhancement Works for Complying the Operational Use and Statutory Requirement with the Buildings

(i) Meeting Functional and Operational Needs

- One additional lift and dumb waiter will be provided in each wing to enhance the vertical circulation and facilitate new uses. They will be placed at less prominent locations with compatible and distinguishable construction.
- Second layer windows will be added to the internal side of the existing window to improve the acoustic and indoor environment. The design of the second layer windows will not impair the original steel frame windows.

(ii) Complying with Statutory Requirements

- Separate escape staircases will be provided to all underground levels for Means of Escape purpose.
- Additional escape staircases with protected lobbies and modification to existing escape staircase are required to fulfil current statutory standard.

C. MITIGATION MEASURES FOR THE CONVERSION WORKS

12. For areas where possible impact of the conversion works could not be avoided, the following mitigation measures are to be implemented based on the previously stated Conservation Principles:

- A condition survey will be conducted to record the existing condition of the buildings for future reference. The result will be submitted to AMO for record.
- Regular site monitoring and precautionary measures will be implemented to protect the CDEs against damage.

- iii. The proposed steel platforms supporting the green roofs and new building facilities will not impose excessive loading to the roof surface.
- iv. The construction method will be reversible without causing any irreversible damage to the existing building envelope, so the building envelope can return to its original setting in future when need arises.
- v. New building services installations will be carefully designed in order not to affect the CDEs and the exterior outlook. They will be placed in less prominent locations. Existing openings for the building services will be utilised as far as possible. Any internal service ductworks and machinery will be placed at inconspicuous locations and hidden above false ceiling.
- vi. The proposed new lifts, dumb waiters and staircases will be of compatible and distinguishable design with the original building structure.
- vii. Any newly added windows will be installed at the inner side of the existing window openings in order not to cause negative visual impact to the building exterior. The design of the windows will not impair the original steel frame windows.
- viii. The proposed new metal railing and the new guard house along the site boundary of Lower Albert Road will be of compatible design and with low visual impact to the existing building.

13. The HIA has concluded that the proposed works to convert the Main Wing and East Wing of the Former CGO into offices of the DoJ is feasible by proper conservation of the building. The works also respect the history of the building by retaining them for government use.



Figure 1 Location Plan

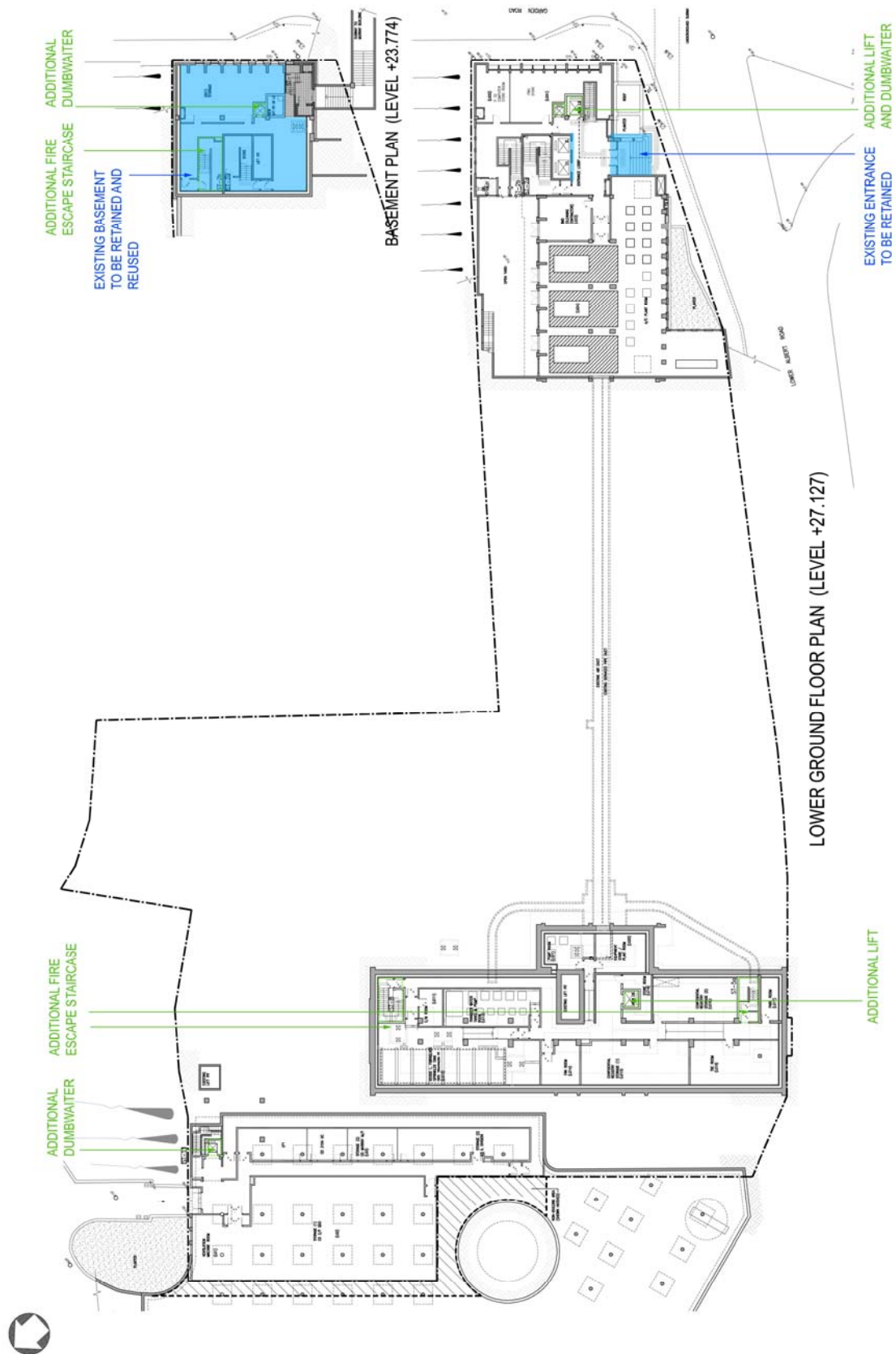


Figure 2 Proposed Basement and Lower Ground Floor Plans



Figure 3 Proposed Ground Floor Plan



Figure 4 Proposed First Floor Plan



Figure 5 Proposed Second Floor Plan

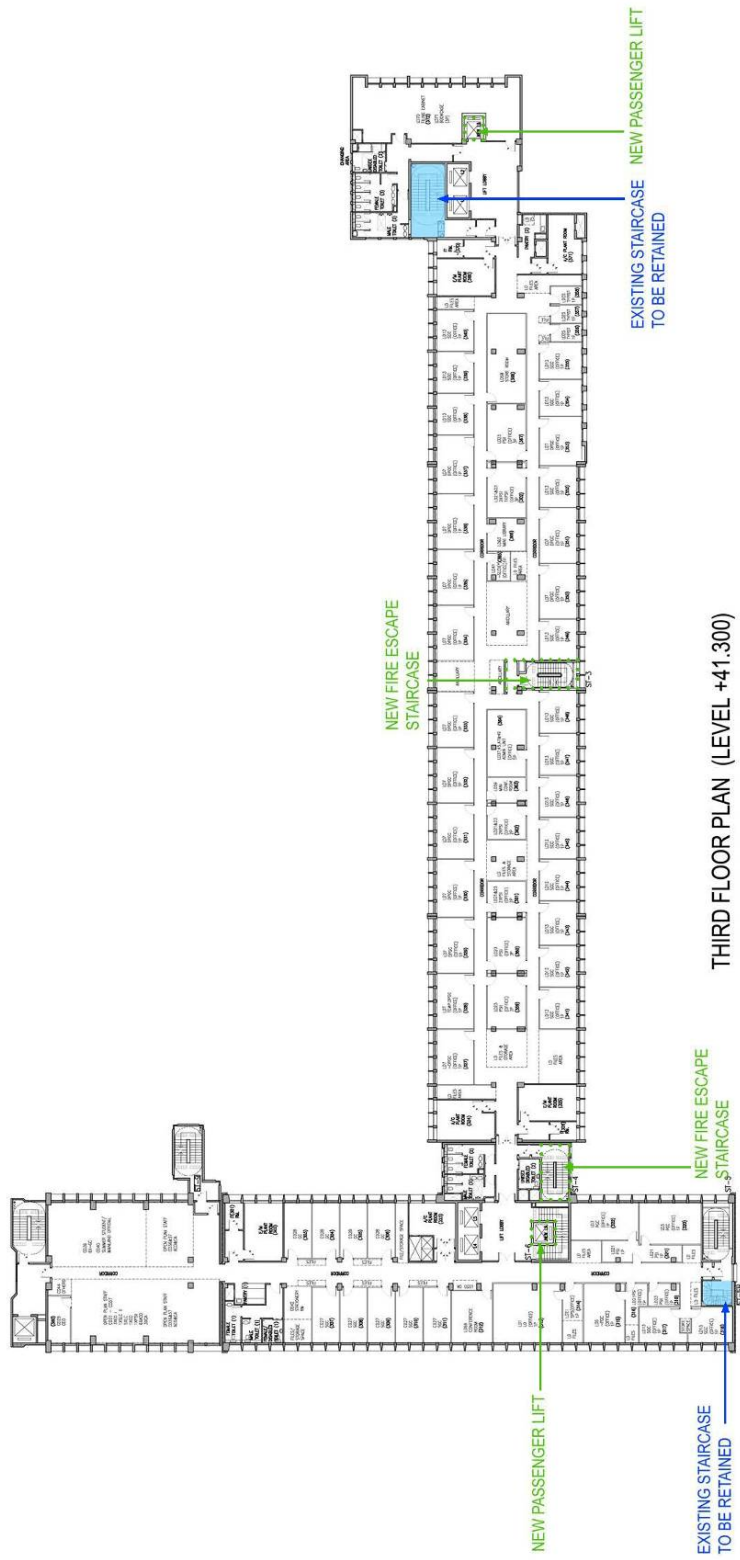


Figure 6 Proposed Third Floor Plan

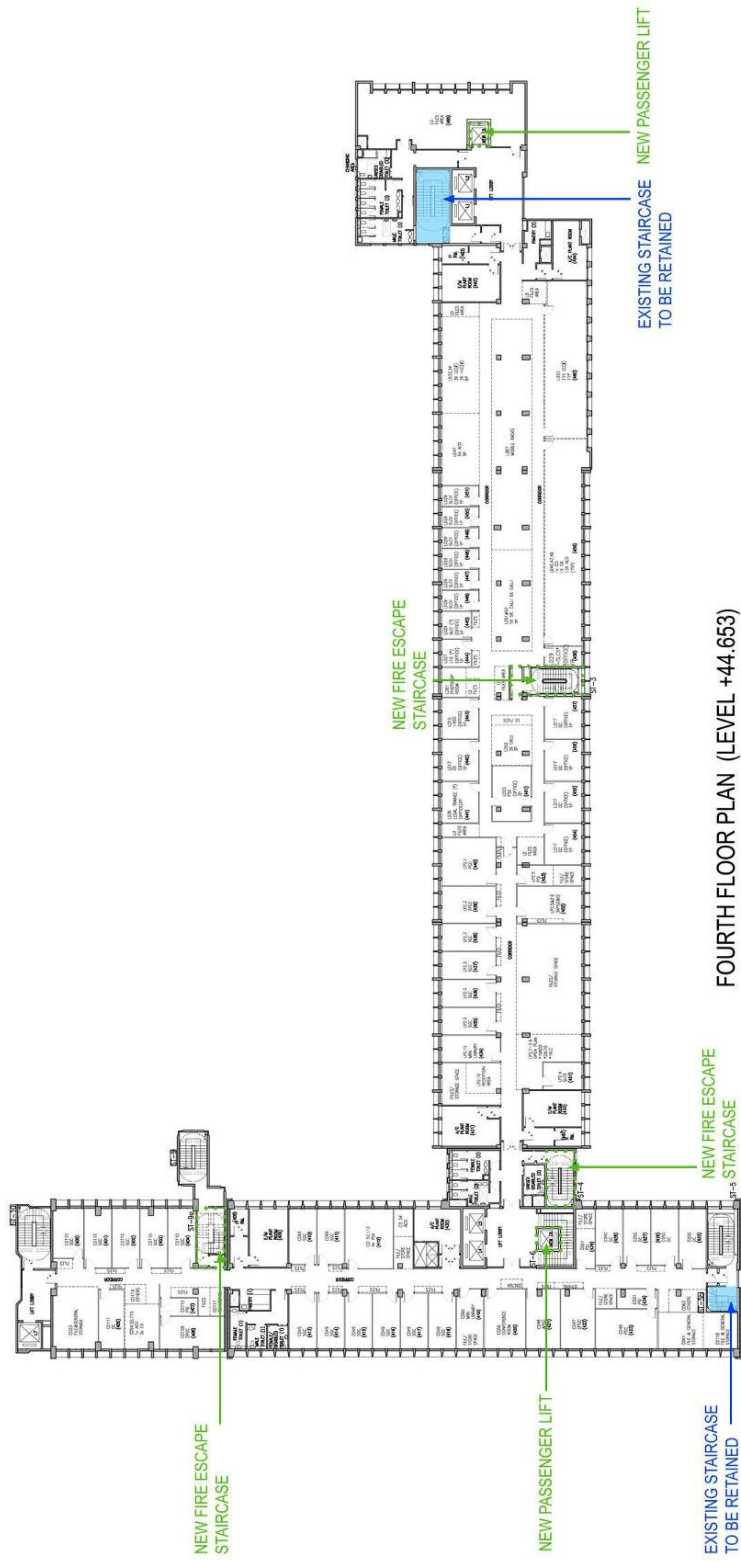


Figure 7 Proposed Fourth Floor Plan



Figure 8 Proposed Fifth Floor Plan



Figure 9 Proposed Sixth Floor Plan

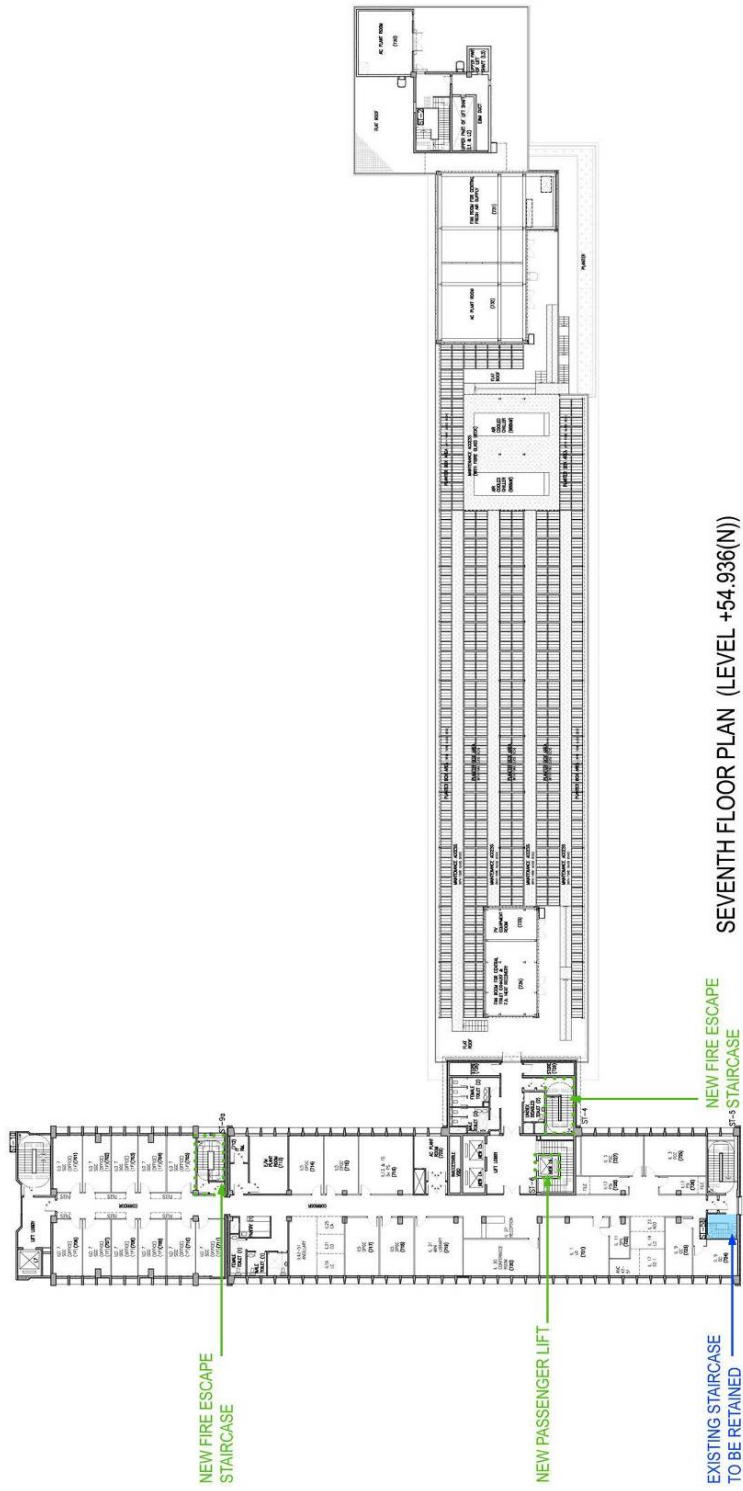


Figure 10 Proposed Seventh Floor Plan

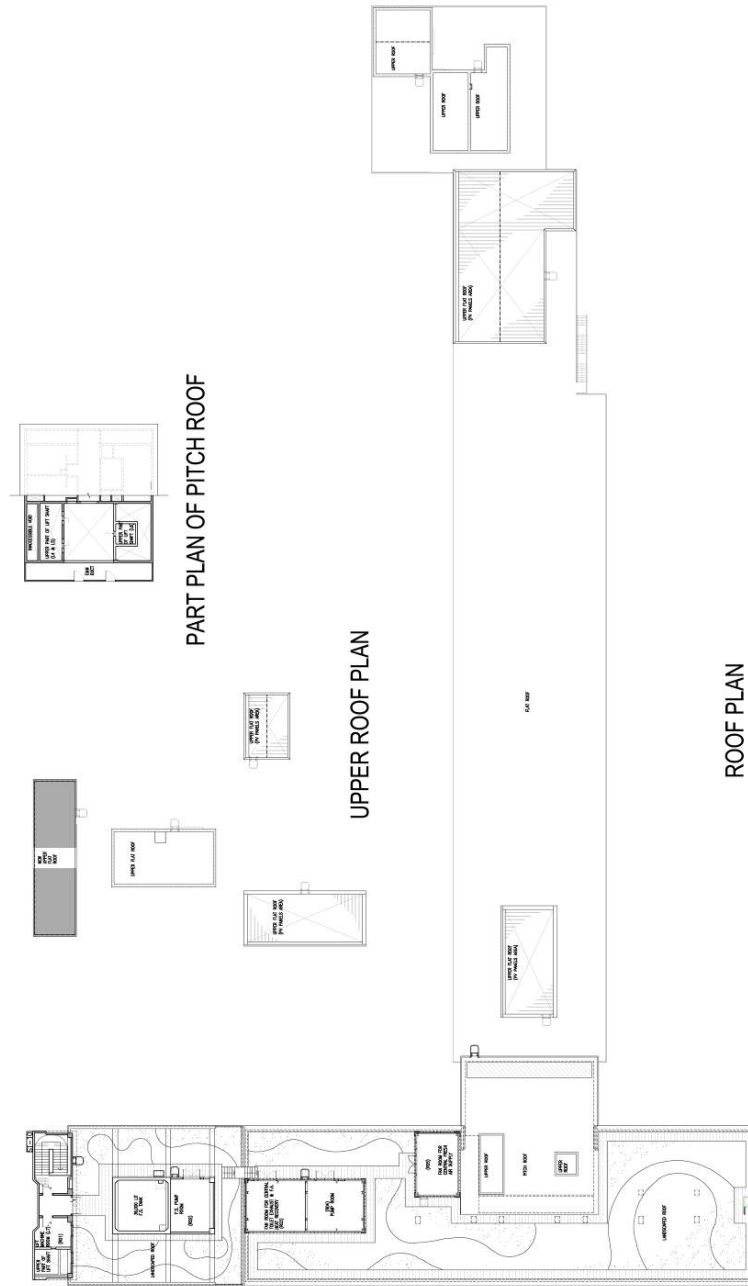


Figure 11 Proposed Roof Plan

CONSERVATION STRATEGY FOR EXTERNAL FACADES

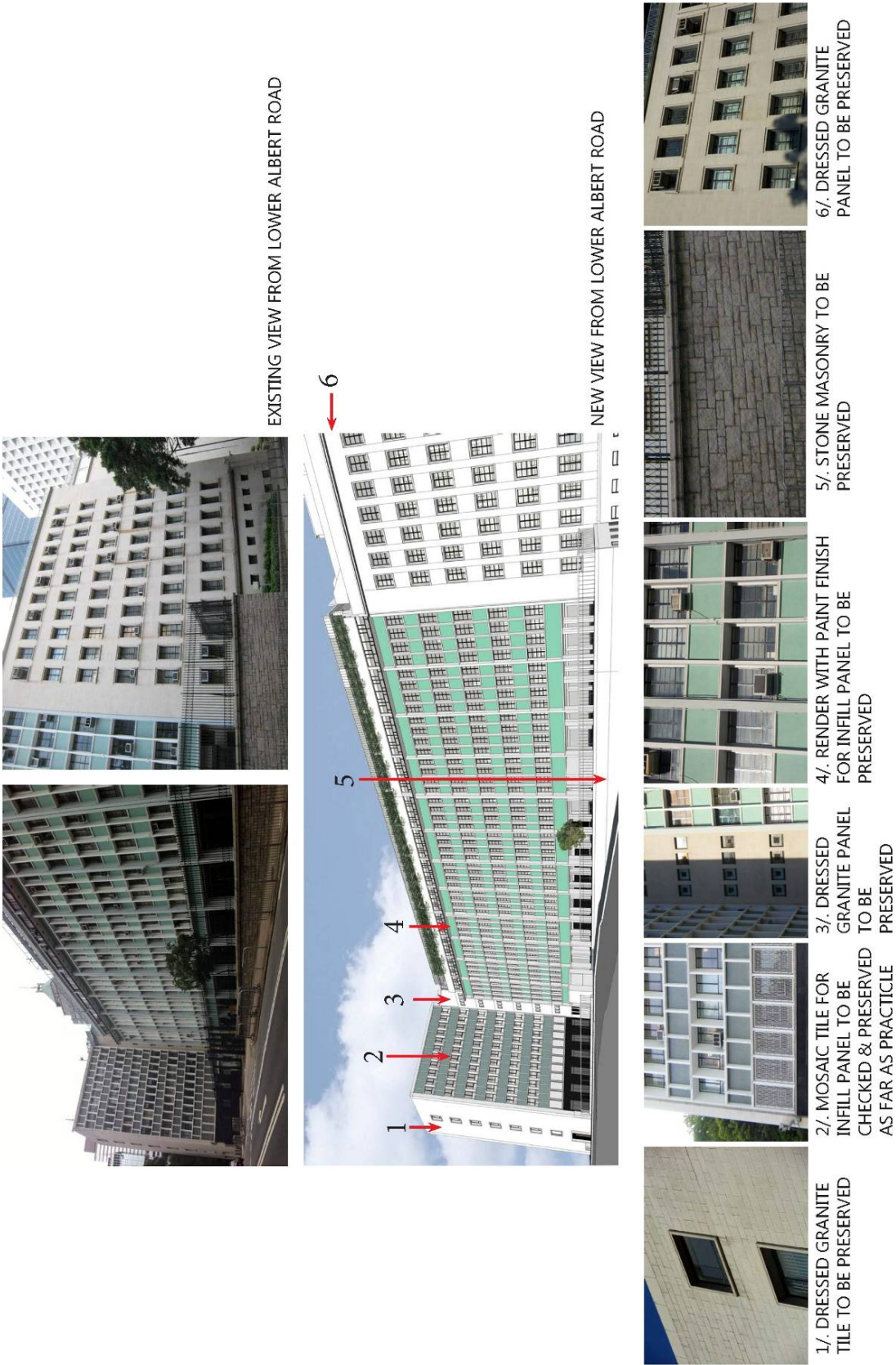
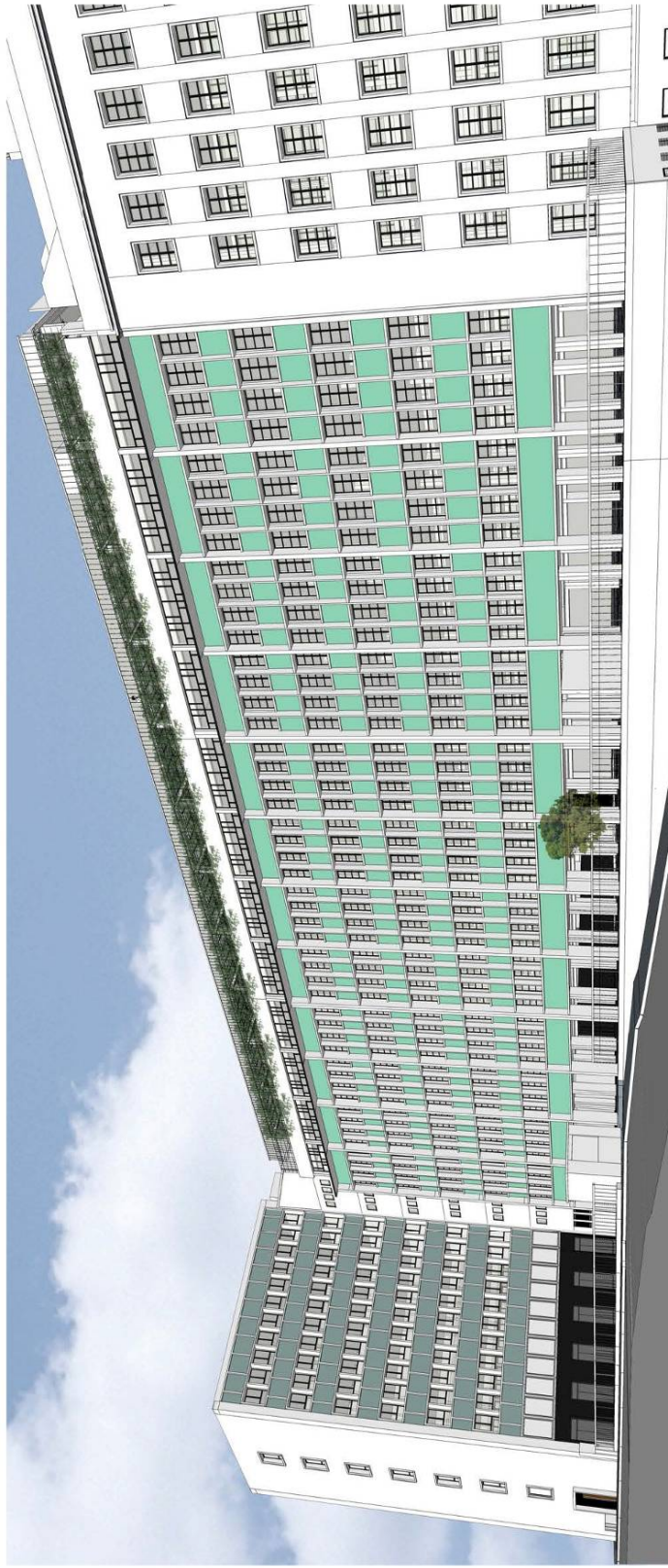


Figure 12 Diagram showing the preservation strategies to different elements of the main facade



NEW VIEW FROM LOWER ALBERT ROAD

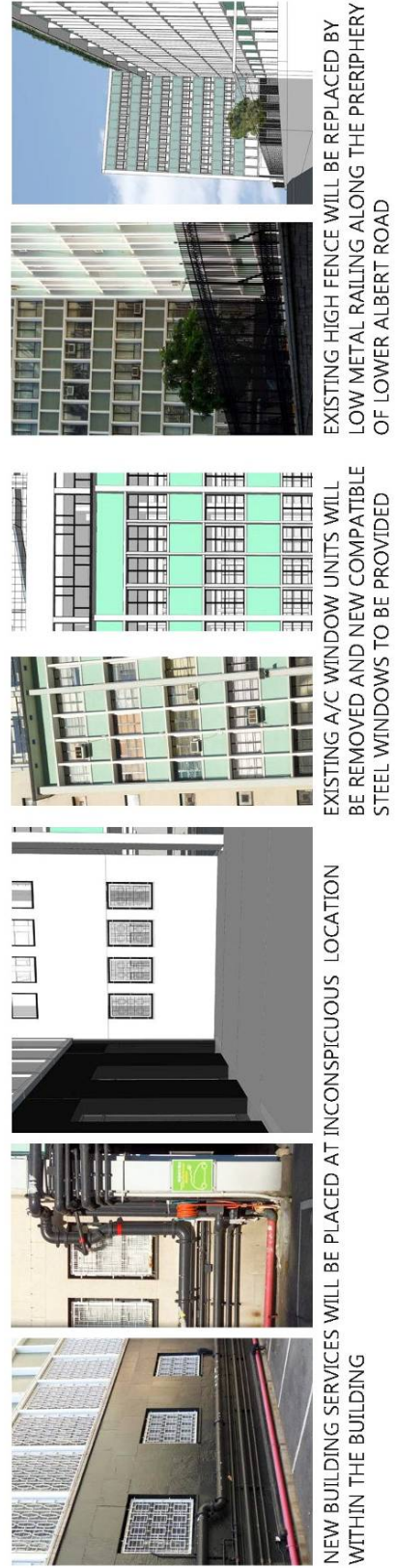


Figure 13 Diagram showing the proposed works to enhance the visual values of the main facade

