

**For discussion
on 14 June 2012**

**BOARD PAPER
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**MEMORANDUM FOR MEMBERS OF THE
ANTIQUITIES ADVISORY BOARD**

**PRACTICE GUIDEBOOK ON COMPLIANCE WITH
BUILDING SAFETY AND HEALTH REQUIREMENTS
UNDER THE BUILDINGS ORDINANCE
FOR ADAPTIVE RE-USE OF
AND ALTERATION AND ADDITION WORKS TO
HERITAGE BUILDINGS 2012**

PURPOSE

This paper aims to introduce the “Practice Guidebook for Adaptive Re-use of and Alteration and Addition Works to Heritage Buildings 2012” (the “Practice Guidebook”) published by the Buildings Department (BD) for Members’ information.

BACKGROUND

2. The Buildings Ordinance (BO) and its subsidiary regulations together with other related enactments constitute the legal framework of the building control system for all private buildings and building works in Hong Kong. The objective of the BO is to provide for the planning, design and construction of buildings to ensure public safety and health in buildings by setting therein the minimum safety and health standards.

3. As most heritage buildings were built a long time ago, their design, construction and facilities provided usually do not fulfill modern needs nor comply with current building safety and health standards. In principle, buildings constructed before any new building safety and health standards come into force

are not required to be upgraded to the new standards¹. However, when such buildings undergo change in use or alteration and addition (A&A) works, those parts of the buildings so affected will be required to be upgraded to comply with the current standards e.g. structural strengthening will be needed if the new use demands greater floor loading, or a new access staircase will be required if the existing one is substandard and cannot meet the fire safety standard for the new use.

4. In recognition of the needs to conserve character defining elements in these buildings, the BD takes a pragmatic approach when processing building plans for proposed adaptive re-use of or A&A works to heritage buildings. An alternative design, though deviating from the prescriptive requirements, may be acceptable if an equivalent level of safety and health standards can be demonstrated to be achieved.

OBJECTIVE OF THE PRACTICE GUIDEBOOK

5. The aim of this Practice Guidebook is to provide design guidelines in term of straight-forward practical solutions and alternative approach that may be adopted for compliance with building safety and health requirements under the BO. It serves as a useful reference for practitioners and the owners to facilitate their planning and design of adaptive re-use of and A&A works to heritage buildings.

PRACTICAL ADVICE

6. Every heritage building has its unique historical and cultural significance. The character defining elements that account for its heritage values may vary from case to case. Successful conservation of heritage buildings requires an optimal balance between the degree of conservation and the type of adaptive re-use and the extent of A&A works proposed.

7. The Practice Guidebook has provided guidance to resolve some common problems that may be encountered in complying with the current building safety

¹ Except fire safety requirements concerning the building fabric and the fire service installations in certain existing buildings may need to be upgraded as stipulated under the Fire Safety (Commercial Premises) Ordinance, Cap 502 and the Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance, Cap572.

and health requirements. Examples of alternative designs are provided which cover subjects including structural safety, fire safety, protective barrier, barrier free access, and provision of sanitary fitments. As every case has to be considered on its own merits and the heritage value of a building feature varies from case to case, the examples described in the Practice Guidebook are by no means suitable for universal application. The designers are advised to fully understand the conservation requirements as agreed with the Antiquities and Monuments Office of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (AMO) before adopting any one of the examples.

8. A previous interim edition of the Practice Guidebook was published in June 2009. This revised Practice Guidebook has been prepared in consultation with the AMO, the Fire Services Department and the Architectural Services Department, and has incorporated the recommendations from the BD's earlier Consultancy Study commissioned on this subject. The Consultant has analysed the relevant building laws and requirements in 8 countries including UK, USA, Canada, Australia, China, Singapore, Japan and Germany, and studied many successful adaptive-reuse projects in these countries.

WAY FORWARD

9. In facilitating the private sector's participation in heritage conservation, a dedicated Heritage Unit has been set up in the BD since 2008 to process all building and structural plan submissions respectively involving adaptive re-use of and A&A works to heritage buildings for approval under the BO.

10. The BD will soon set up a Technical Committee on Building Safety and Health Requirements for Historic Buildings under the BO (Technical Committee) comprising fire engineering expert, architectural conservationist and representatives from relevant government departments, building professional institutes, academic institutions, organisations representing people with disabilities, etc. The Technical Committee will provide a platform for sharing views and experience on the methodology to address building safety and health requirements having regards to the conservation needs. It will collect and consider any comments received regarding the use of the Practice Guidebook and recommend on appropriate measures to be taken in response to these comments.

ADVICE SOUGHT

11. To note the promulgation of the Practice Guidebook to facilitate planning and design of adaptive re-use of and A&A works to heritage buildings for compliance with building safety and health requirements under the BO.

Buildings Department
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