

**HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT IN RESPECT OF  
THE REVITALISATION OF THE HAW PAR MANSION**

**BACKGROUND**

Batch III of the Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme (the Revitalisation Scheme) was launched in 2011. In 2013, the Secretary for Development approved in-principle the proposal submitted by the Haw Par Music Foundation Ltd. (the Applicant) to adaptively reuse the Haw Par Mansion (the Mansion) as Haw Par Music Farm. Government funding for the relevant capital works will be sought for this project. The project will be financially self-sustainable in revitalising the Mansion to provide music education on Western and Chinese classical music.

2. The Mansion was constructed in 1936. It was originally built along with the renowned Tiger Balm Garden, a garden purposely built for free public entry so as to promote the products of Tiger Balm when there was no public park or recreation facility available for the Chinese in Hong Kong in the 1930s. The owner, Aw Boon Haw, was a prominent Burmese Chinese entrepreneur and philanthropist. His Tiger Balm products were very popular in Southeast Asia. The Mansion in Hong Kong was one of the three luxurious mansions owned by the Aw's family in the world. Subsequent to the sale of the last lot of Tiger Balm Garden in 2000, the Mansion became the only physical trace of the Tiger Balm Garden which was significant in the social context of Hong Kong from the 1930s to the 1990s.

3. The Mansion is a reinforced concrete four-storey building including the roof terrace. It comprises a main block and servants' quarters. The ground floor of the main block was mainly used for entertainment and leisure, while the first floor was a more private area where bedrooms were located. The penthouse on the roof terrace was once served as a Buddhist temple for prayers and meditation.

4. The Mansion adopted the Chinese Eclectic style which has a strong association with the social background in the 1920s and 1930s. It was the time when the social status of Chinese businessmen began to rise in Hong Kong, who determined to build their residences with Chinese architectural features so

as to show their patriotism. The Mansion has adopted the Chinese architectural appearance with prominent Chinese architectural features, but using Western spatial planning and construction method. For instance, the garden in front of the Mansion is a Western-styled garden, but there are also Chinese garden elements such as the pavilion, corner tower structure and small bridge, demonstrating the essence of the Chinese Eclectic style. The Mansion together with its private garden is one of the few surviving examples of such style in Hong Kong.

5. The luxurious Mansion with its considerable scale, well-thought spatial configuration, and its richness in architectural decoration especially in the interior, is one of the best examples of a well-off family's house in Hong Kong. Over the years, there has been little changes to the Mansion and it still has a high level of authenticity. In recognition of the heritage value of the Mansion, the Antiquities Advisory Board has accorded a Grade 1 status to the building and its private garden in 2009.

## **HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT (HIA)**

6. In accordance with the Development Bureau Technical Circular (Works) No. 6/2009, the Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO) considered that a HIA is required to be carried out. Based on AMO's Conservation Guidelines contained in the Resource Kit of the Revitalisation Scheme, a set of heritage impact assessments has been conducted to outline the proposed project scope and design, and to set out the mitigation measures to avoid adverse impact on the historic building in the course of revitalisation works. The HIA for the Mansion and its private garden has been completed and submitted to the AMO for consideration. Key points of the HIA are summarised below.

### **A. Project Proposal**

7. Under the Consolidated Project Proposal submitted by the Applicant, the Mansion and its private garden (the Main Site) will be adaptively reused as a music school. The project scope comprises the restoration and conversion of the Mansion and the construction of new supporting facilities at an adjoining government land (the Ancillary Site). The proposed school will accommodate classrooms, practice rooms, interpretation areas and office at the original

Mansion. The Ancillary Site will provide car parking spaces, drop-off area, and a new service block for accommodating plant rooms, accessible lift and staircase. A new footbridge will be constructed for connecting the service block at the Ancillary Site and the Main Site, which is elevated at a higher level and is separated by a public lane underneath.

8. Haw Par Music Farm will offer music and arts related programs to people from pre-school children to adults. It will also organise free public guided tours to showcase the heritage and facilitate for their understanding of the cultural value and conservation of the Mansion.

## **B. Conservation Principles**

9. According to the HIA report, the Conservation Policies to conserve and interpret the Mansion are as follows:-

### (a) Building Use

The new use of the Mansion should be compatible with its original use, which means that the new use should not jeopardize the image of the Mansion and any unnecessary interventions to the historic building should be avoided.

### (b) Interpretation

Interpretation in the form of guided tours and displays should be provided to promote the cultural significance of the Mansion to the general public.

### (c) Preservation of Building Fabrics

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

The CDEs which should be preserved or repaired include: -

#### The Mansion - exterior

- Building mass and building façades (including granite base, fair-faced brick walls and walls with plasterworks, architectural features such as columns with featured plinths, brackets, lintels, mouldings, overhangs, window heads and

sills, balconies, verandahs, terraces, entrance porch and the like);

- Roofs with Chinese glazed ceramic roof tiles and decorations, water tanks, chimney stacks and poles, covered walkway at roof terrace, flat roof and ceramic grilles;
- Palladian staircase, entrance marble steps, granite steps, steps with landing, fence wall and retaining wall; and
- Cast iron downpipes, antique lanterns, and inscriptions above the moon gates.

#### **The Mansion - interior**

- General spatial organisation, building structure, and original building layout which comprises a main block and a servants' quarters extension;
- Decorative features including historic plaster works, moulded cornice, projecting Chinese-styled eaves at the sitting room, reliefs on walls, picture rails, moulded skirting, timber screens with craved motifs, metal grille and metal balustrades, and fireplaces with/without mirrors;
- Finishes including plastered finishes, marble, terrazzo, mosaic tiles, ceramic tiles, timber parquet floor tiles and encaustic ceramic floor tiles;
- Timber paneled doors, stained glass doors in Chinese moon-gate style, featured timber doors in Chinese moon-gate style, metal framed doors, gate at kitchen and metal framed windows;
- Hardwood staircases;
- Dumb waiter, stairs for dish delivery and dish delivery passage;
- Built-in furniture;
- Bathroom (including the original setting, interior decoration, sanitary wares and fittings) and security room with built-in safe; and

- Antique light fittings and some old items left by the former owner.

#### **Private Garden**

- The setting and layout of the private garden including the sculpture and plantations, corner tower, pavilion, low boundary fence walls, pond, fountain, arched bridge, mosaic tiled floor, granite steps and landing, ornamented metal gates and side metal gate, granite entrance portal, external retaining walls, figurines from the former Tiger Balm Garden, etc.

#### **(d) Setting**

- i. The setting of the Mansion with its private garden at the front built on an elevated platform should be respected and preserved;
- ii. The proposed new services block at the Ancillary Site will be designed in such a way that it will not overwhelm the original appearance of the Mansion. The appearance of the new services block will be compatible with and distinguishable from the existing building fabrics of the Mansion; and
- iii. The interior setting of the main block of the Mansion will be preserved, while greater flexibility is allowed for the servants' quarters and storeroom area which will be re-partitioned to accommodate mainly storeroom, office and toilets.

### **C. Key Design Proposals**

10. The key proposed works for the revitalisation project are listed below -

#### **(a) Overall Site Approach**

- i. The project is intended to renovate and adaptively reuse the existing Mansion as a music school. A new services block will be built at the Ancillary Site for housing plant rooms, accessible lift and staircase. A new footbridge will be built

for connecting the new services block which is located at the Ancillary Site to the private garden of the Mansion;

- ii. The setting of the Mansion with its private garden at the front built on an elevated platform will be respected and preserved; and
- iii. The original setting and layout of the private garden will be preserved. The existing garden features and plantations will also be preserved as far as possible, save only for the provision of a ramp for disabled access and new protective barriers along the existing low boundary fence wall in compliance with the protective barrier requirements.

(b) Conservation and Conversion Works for transforming the Mansion into a music school

i. Exterior

- No alteration works will be carried out on the northwest, southwest and northeast façades, except for the provision of a new entrance on the northeast façade and the enclosure of balcony on the 1/F at the southwest façade to suit the new use. Minor alteration to the southeast façade and elevations of the servants' quarters will be carried out to cater for the provision of barrier free access (BFA), the compliance of protective barrier requirements, and the means of escape (MOE) requirements (the construction of the new MOE staircase on the southeast façade above the new glass enclosure for classrooms on upper floors);
- Existing metal framed windows and doors will be preserved, repaired and reinstated where necessary;
- Existing outdoor units at the balconies, verandahs and corridors will be removed, and the corresponding metal windows or doors affected will be restored to match the originals; and
- Some of the metal framed doors will be replaced by new doors to suit the statutory requirement. The original metal framed doors will be salvaged and stored for future use or interpretation.

ii. Interior

- The layout and setting of the interior will be largely retained, except for removing the partition at an existing toilet for conversion into a staff common room, and re-partitioning the servants' quarters for suiting the new use;
- The original architectural features identified as CDEs will be preserved, while new facilities will be installed to accommodate the new use which will avoid the disturbance to the CDEs; and
- New services will be routed internally as far as practicable at obscured locations.

iii. Preserved Features for Heritage Interpretation

- The following places in the Mansion will be preserved and interpreted by guided tours –
  - Stairs for dish delivery and the dish delivery passage;
  - The original sitting room on G/F, including its spatial setting and original architectural features;
  - Built-in display cabinets on the 1/F hallways;
  - Bathroom on 1/F, including the original setting, interior decoration, sanitary wares and fittings;
  - Security room with built-in safe; and
  - Corner room on the roof terrace.

iv. Enhancement Works for Complying With the Statutory Requirements of the Buildings Ordinance or other Modern Day's Requirements -

- New outdoor ramp at the private garden to provide BFA;
- New protective barriers along the low boundary fence wall to comply with the protective barrier requirements;
- New lift for BFA;
- Upgrade the Palladian Staircase, hardwood staircase and staircase connecting G/F to LG/F former kitchen to comply with the protective barrier and MOE requirements;

- Addition of removable deck at the terrace on G/F and the balcony on 1/F to provide BFA;
- Addition of open staircase on the southeast façade for MOE provision;
- Addition of new door at the classrooms to comply with the MOE requirements;
- Replace existing door and add new door to comply with BFA and MOE requirements;
- Form a new doorway at the classrooms to the verandah to comply with the MOE requirements;
- Addition of fire-rated glazing to the existing windows adjacent to the new open staircase to comply with the Fire Safety Code;
- Addition of new unisex toilets and male and female toilets;
- Recast four beams at the ceiling on 1/F to upgrade the structural provision to meet the design requirement;
- Addition of raised decks on the roof terrace for BFA;
- Addition works to the existing balustrades along the corridors at the servants' quarters to meet protective barrier requirements;
- Replace the existing servants' staircase with a new staircase to comply with the MOE requirements; and
- Air-conditioning, lighting and electrical power distribution including associated plant to be sited in the new services block at the Ancillary Site.

#### **D. Mitigation Measures for the Conversion Works**

11. For areas where impacts of the conversion works could not be avoided, the following mitigation measures are to be implemented based on the Conservation Principles stated above –



- i. A reversible system will be adopted for the addition of outdoor ramp, which is of compatible design and will be discernible from the original historic fabric;
- ii. The location of the new lift is chosen to be in an area of comparatively lower significance and in a less prominent area, such that the major building layout of the main block at the Mansion will not be disturbed. The new lift structure will be a self-standing structure. The disturbance to the historic fabrics should be kept to a minimum as far as practicable. The external finishes of the lift will be distinguishable from the existing historic fabric;
- iii. Reversible pot planters are proposed to be added along the existing balustrades and low boundary fence wall to prevent people from approaching, subject to the approval of the Buildings Department. The planter box will be subtle in design and properly proportioned to ensure that they will not overwhelm the original appearance of the balustrades and low boundary fence wall. If the option of adding pot planters is not approved, new compatible balustrade will be installed along the existing balustrades and/ or low boundary fence wall, which will be simple and minimal in design, and will be discernible from the original historic fabric. Fixing points will be kept to a minimum as far as practicable;
- iv. The new handrails to be added at the staircase from G/F to LG/F will be fixed in a manner to avoid disturbance to the encaustic ceramic tile flooring of the staircase and the dado finished with wall tiles and rails, which are CDEs. The new handrails will be minimal and simple in design which will not overwhelm the original appearance of the staircase and the dado;
- v. The removable deck at the terrace will be reversible, and the design adopted will be readily distinguishable but compatible with the existing building fabrics. The removable deck will only partially cover the terrace, such that visitors can still be able to appreciate the original patterned mosaic floor tiles at the terrace;

- vi. The location of the new open staircase will be at the southeast façade, a location with a comparatively lower heritage significance. The open staircase will be structurally independent without affecting the structural stability of the existing building. The design is intended to be a light-weight structure such that the essence of the original elevation design could still be readable;
- vii. The locations for the addition of new doors are in a less prominent area with comparatively lower heritage significance. Original timber paneled door or metal framed door will be salvaged and stored for future use or interpretation. New doors to be installed will be readily compatible but distinguishable in design which will not overwhelm the existing historic fabrics;
- viii. New doorways will be formed by removing masonry units on the façades but at less prominent locations and shall be subject to the advice from the Registered Structural Engineer;
- ix. The fire-rated glazing will be installed internally, which will not affect the general appearance of the original metal framed windows;
- x. The locations for the new toilets are chosen in less prominent areas or areas with comparatively lower heritage significance where greater flexibility is allowed for re-partitioning, such that the major building layout of the main block at the Mansion will not be disturbed;
- xi. The beams to be recast will follow the original beam profile and dimensions, and will be finished with matching materials, texture, colour and decorative details as the existing ones;
- xii. The installation of the raised deck on the roof terrace will be reversible, and the design adopted will be readily distinguishable but compatible with the existing building fabrics. Fixings will be kept to a minimum as far as possible;
- xiii. The proposed new services block at the Ancillary Site will be designed in such a way that it will not overwhelm the

original appearance of the Mansion. The appearance of the new services block will be compatible with and distinguishable from the existing building fabrics of the Mansion;

- xiv. New building services will be grouped together when entering the building so that minimum number of holes will be made on the wall surfaces. Existing openings will be utilised as far as practicable. Bulkhead will be incorporated for housing the building services routing, and will be carefully designed in order not to affect the CDEs;
- xv. Cartographic and photographic surveys to record the Mansion site will be conducted before the commencement of conversion works. A set of record drawings will be prepared and furnished to the AMO after completion of the conversion works;
- xvi. Provision for the protection of CDEs will be incorporated into the contract documents for the construction works, followed by regular monitoring of the protection measures by site supervisory staff during the construction; and
- xvii. Any renovation, alteration and maintenance works during the conversion and future operation of the building should follow the principles set out in the HIA.

## **THE WAY FORWARD**

12. The Applicant will ensure that all works to be carried out for heritage conservation are in strict compliance with the requirements set out in the HIA as endorsed by the AMO.

Haw Par Music Foundation Limited

December 2014

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## Proposed Site Layout Plan





Artistic impression of the Ancillary Site





Artistic impression of the Mansion viewing from the Private Garden



Artistic impression of the Mansion viewing from the southeast





Artistic impression of ceiling at the former dining room on the ground floor inside the Mansion





Artistic impression of the hallway on the first floor inside the Mansion