

**MEMORANDUM FOR THE
ANTIQUITIES ADVISORY BOARD**

DECLARATION OF THREE HISTORIC BUILDINGS AS MONUMENTS

PURPOSE

This paper seeks Members' advice on the proposal to declare three Grade 1 historic buildings, namely Blocks 7, 10 and 25 at the old Lei Yue Mun Barracks (the "Barracks"), currently the Lei Yue Mun Park and Holiday Village, which are amongst the earliest buildings constructed in the previous military facility, as monuments under section 3(1) of the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (Cap. 53) (the "Ordinance").

HERITAGE VALUE

The Barracks

2. The Barracks was one of the earliest and most important British Army fortifications in Hong Kong. Situated at the northeast corner of Hong Kong Island overlooking the eastern approach to the Victoria Harbour, Lei Yue Mun occupied a strategic position. In 1885, the military decided to construct a permanent infrastructure at Lei Yue Mun. In 1889, land was transferred to the War Department for constructing barracks at Lei Yue Mun. The Barracks consisted of the central area (main barracks), the western ridge (upper fort) and the headland (lower fort). The main barracks, built at different times from 1890 to 1939, mainly served as offices and married quarters for the British Army. By the 1890s, the fortifications at Lei Yue Mun had fully become an important point of coastal defence and continued to expand in the following decades.

3. By the 1930s, however, the strategic importance of Lei Yue Mun declined considerably as a result of technological and tactical advances. On 19

December 1941, the Barracks fell to the hands of the Japanese in the Battle of Hong Kong. In the post-war period, the Barracks was used by the British Army as a training ground until 1987, after which the Barracks was returned to the Hong Kong Government for civil use. The central area and the western ridge have become the Lei Yue Mun Park and Holiday Village since 1988, whereas the military installations at the headland were restored to form the Museum of Coastal Defence which opened in 2000.

Block 7

4. Block 7 was built in 1890-1895 at the north end of the Barracks on top of a prestigious hill overlooking Lei Yue Mun Pass. It is believed to be one of the earliest buildings constructed in the first phase of the barracks development. Originally it was built as Officers Quarters for the Royal Artillery. In the post-war period, it has been used by the Hong Kong Military Service Corps (“HKMSC”) as a Training Centre.

5. Block 7 is a rare and early example of the once popular “bungalow” design of dwelling house that was introduced into Hong Kong from India by the British. Its architectural style is “Colonial Vernacular”, built in a basic Classical version of a traditional “bungalow”, which featured the characteristic wide open verandahs on three sides, a raised ground floor and a central “Jack-Roof”. The building is rectangular in plan, of single-storey brick construction and set on low segmental arches. Two ornamental brick and granite chimney stacks still exist. External architectural features include simple square Tuscan order columns which support the verandah roofs. The main entrance doorway has a segmental arch and central keystone. Some Classical plaster mouldings to the ceiling cornices still remain.

Block 10

6. Block 10 was built in 1890-1895 with an extension added in 1935. The older part is believed to be one of the earliest buildings constructed in the first phase of the barracks development. It occupies a commanding site towards the north. Originally it was built as Soldiers Quarters for the Royal Artillery.

7. Block 10 is probably the most elegant building in the Barracks and a rare piece of simplified Classical design architecture. It is a three-storey long rectangular building featuring open arched, colonnaded and balustraded verandahs on the front and rear facades. The segmental arches are supported on square Tuscan order columns. The first and second floor verandahs have classical urn-shaped balustrading. The 1935 extension was generally constructed to the same scale and to the same design as the older block. The chimneys and most of the fireplaces still exist.

Block 25

8. Block 25 is believed to have been built in the late 1890s to early 1900s. It is one of the earliest buildings constructed in the first phase of the barracks development and is a good representative example of early colonial military architecture. It was used as the Officers Mess.

9. Block 25 is an elegant simplified Classical design two-storey building with open colonnaded and balustraded verandahs on three sides. The east facade retains much of its original appearance. The walls and columns are painted brickwork. The verandahs are supported by square brick columns with simple bases and capitals. The first floor verandah has typical urn-shaped classical balustrading, but the balustrading to the ground floor verandah is of a different design. There are moulded cornices at the first floor level and at the eaves level. Internally, the spaces remain structurally similar to their original appearances.

10. Blocks 7, 10 and 25 of the Barracks are located on government land and currently managed by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department ("LCSD"). Heritage appraisals and photographs of the three historic buildings are at Annexes A to F.

GRADING AND DECLARATION

11. In recognition of the heritage value of these three historic buildings, the Antiquities Advisory Board accorded Grade 1 status to them on 18 December 2009.

12. At the meeting on 26 November 2008, the Board endorsed the establishment of a formal relationship between the statutory monument declaration system and the administrative grading system for historic buildings. Under the endorsed arrangements, Grade 1 building, defined as “building of outstanding merit, which every effort should be made to preserve if possible”, will serve as a pool of highly valuable heritage buildings for consideration by the Antiquities Authority (i.e. the Secretary for Development) as to whether some of these may have reached the “high threshold” of monuments for statutory protection under the Ordinance.

13. The Antiquities and Monuments Office (“AMO”) considers that with the significant heritage values of Blocks 7, 10 and 25 as explained in paragraphs 2 to 9 above, these three historic buildings, being the earliest constructed in the Barracks, have reached the “high threshold” to be declared as monuments for permanent protection under the Ordinance. Support from LCSD, the management department, has been obtained.

14. In addition to Blocks 7, 10 and 25, there are six other Grade 1 historic buildings in the Barracks (namely, Blocks 18, 20, 21, 30, 31 and 32). The AMO will, in due course, consider whether these six other buildings have also reached the “high threshold” of monuments, and will seek the Board’s advice as appropriate.

ADVICE SOUGHT

15. In accordance with section 3(1) of the Ordinance, the Antiquities Authority may, after consultation with the Board and with the approval of the Chief Executive, by notice in the Gazette, declare any historic building to be a monument. Members’ advice on whether the three historic buildings, i.e. Blocks 7, 10 and 25 at the Barracks, should be declared as monuments under section 3(1) of the Ordinance is therefore sought. The intended monument boundaries of the declaration are shown in **Annex G**.

NEXT STEP

16. Should Members support the proposal to declare the subject three historic buildings as monuments, the AMO will take this forward in accordance with the provisions of the Ordinance.

Antiquities and Monuments Office
Leisure and Cultural Services Department
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