

**Heritage Impact Assessment in respect of
the Revitalisation of the Lady Ho Tung Welfare Centre
at No. 38 Kwu Tung Road**

BACKGROUND

Under Batch IV of the Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme (Revitalisation Scheme), the Secretary for Development granted approval-in-principle in 2015 for the proposed conservation and adaptive re-use of the Lady Ho Tung Welfare Centre (LHTWC) at No. 38 Kwu Tung Road (please refer to Figure 1 for the location plan) as “Lady Ho Tung Welfare Centre Eco-Learn Institute” submitted by the Sik Sik Yuen Lady Ho Tung Welfare Centre Eco-Learn Institute Limited (Eco-Learn Institute Limited).

2. The LHTWC comprises the Main Block and the Bungalow, which are single-storey buildings connected by a covered walkway. It was constructed in 1933 as a maternity centre, and served as a welfare centre providing medical treatment and health education activities until 2005. The two existing buildings of Chinese Eclectic style with Arts and Crafts features have been left vacant since 2005 and were accorded a Grade 2 status by the Antiquities Advisory Board in December 2009. The LHTWC will be converted and revitalised comprising a heritage interpretation area, an ecology discovery area, a customer service area and an outdoor agriculture microcosm area (please refer to Figure 2 for the general view of the LHTWC).

3. Statement of Cultural Significance

(a) Historical Significance

- (i) Construction works of LHTWC took place from 1932 to 1933. The centre was officially opened in 1934. It was named after Lady Ho Tung, whose original name was Mak Sau-ying, the first wife of Sir Robert Ho Tung (1862-1955). Thus, there is a name board with the inscription “Lady Ho Tung Welfare Centre” over the entrance of the centre; and

- (ii) It was one of the first rural clinics established in the New Territories and served the residents of the entire district. From 1934 to 1973, it served mainly as a maternity centre, and also as a sanatorium for Indian soldiers. In 1948, an entrance hall was partitioned off in order to provide a specialised hospital ward for sick members of the Police Force stationed in the New Territories. It had been a general out-patient clinic providing medical treatment and health education activities until 2005.

(b) Architectural Significance

- (i) The LHTWC comprises two single-storey buildings in a mixed architectural style combining Western Arts and Crafts features with local vernacular features such as the Chinese tiled roofs and curling end ridges. Such a style may be called Chinese Eclectic style with Arts and Crafts features. Arts and Crafts features include the rendered and painted walls and plinth, “cottage” type doors and windows, red-brick and quarry tile trim to windows and chimney stacks, and prominent rainwater pipes with swan’s neck bends connected to the gutter outlets. Both buildings are symmetrically planned. The clinic has a colonnaded verandah while the bungalow annex has an enclosed courtyard; and
- (ii) Buildings in Chinese Eclectic style with Arts and Crafts features are quite rare in Hong Kong. These two buildings therefore not only have historical interest but also built heritage value. They are well maintained and fortunately do not appear to have undergone major alterations thereby retaining their authenticity.

(c) Social Significance

- (i) The LHTWC once served as a maternity centre, and also as a sanatorium for Indian soldiers and a specialised hospital ward for sick members of the Police Force. It was also a general out-patient clinic providing medical treatment and health education activities under the management of the Shek Wu Hui Jockey Club Clinic. LHTWC provided medical services for residents in the nearby areas, such as Kam Tsin Tsuen, Kwu Tung

and Ho Sheung Heung. A number of elderly patients used the clinic's services for a long time and some of them were born in LHTWC; and

- (ii) Apart from the LHTWC, the Tung Ying Hok Pok in the vicinity (now demolished), the Ho Tung Bridge at Sheung Yue River and the Kam Tsin Village Ho Tung School and its Lady Ho Tung Hall in Kam Tsin Village are all donated by Ho Tung Family, which reflect Sir Robert Ho Tung family's influence and contribution to the Kwu Tung community.

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

4. According to Technical Circular (Works) No. 6/2009 regarding the Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) mechanism introduced by the Development Bureau, an HIA is required to be carried out with the objective of drawing up a Conservation Management Plan and assessing the heritage impact based on the proposed project scope and design. The HIA sets out mitigation measures to avoid adverse impact on the buildings in the course of conversion and outlines the future interpretation, maintenance and management strategies, based on the Conservation Guidelines of the Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO) laid down in the Resource Kit of the Revitalisation Scheme. The HIA has been completed and submitted to the AMO.

A. Project Proposal

5. Under the Consolidated Project Proposal submitted by the Eco-Learn Institute Limited, the LHTWC and its site will be revitalised into a heritage interpretation-cum-local ecology discovery centre to showcase the history and memory of the historic buildings and the contribution of Sir Robert Ho Tung family; it also provides a series of bioblitz training programmes to enhance the public awareness of the importance of ecology conservation and the concept of sustainable development. The following revitalisation works and programmes are proposed:

- (a) A Heritage Interpretation Area will be set up in the Bungalow to showcase the history and photo records as well as the revitalisation

process of the buildings. The contribution of Sir Robert Ho Tung family will be displayed at the colonnaded verandah of the Main Block;

- (b) An Ecology Discovery Area will be set up for displaying the ecological equipment, photo records, specimen and reference books and organising virtual guide tour and simple biological experiment to visitors for learning experience of biodiversity, ecology and sustainable development;
- (c) A Customer Service Area will be set up to organise guided tours to the heritages in the surrounding area and the settlement culture, and display visitors information on points of cultural and heritage interest in the area; and
- (d) An Agriculture Microcosm Area will be set up for training programmes in outdoor farming areas for public to experience the traditional farming that was once operated by Lady Ho Tung nearby, offering opportunity to appreciate the LHTWC in an interesting manner (please refer to Figure 3 for the site plan).

B. Conservation Principles

6. According to the HIA report, the conservation policies to conserve and interpret the LHTWC are as follows:

(a) Building Use

The new use of the LHTWC should be compatible with its original use, which means that it should not jeopardise the image of the welfare centre and any unnecessary interventions to the historic buildings should be avoided.

(b) Preservation of Building Fabrics

Authenticity of the heritage of the LHTWC and its architectural merits should be maintained with minimum intervention. The key Character Defining Elements (CDEs) should be repaired and

preserved in-situ as far as possible, such as:

(i) Main Block

- External elements such as building façade, Chinese style roof with hip and gable roof structure, stone doorcase and threshold of the main entrance, timber French doors, timber casement windows, chimney stacks, colonnaded verandah, cast iron rainwater pipes, etc.; and
- Internal elements such as timber roof structure, timber suspended ceiling, fireplaces, ceramic photographs of Sir Robert Ho Tung and Lady Ho Tung, timber suspended ceilings, glazed wall tiles, etc.

(ii) Bungalow

- External elements such as building façade, Chinese hip roof, timber battened doors, timber casement windows, chimney stacks, open courtyard, cast iron columns, cast iron rainwater pipes, wall lamp, etc.; and
- Internal elements such as timber roof structure, fireplaces, etc.

(iii) External Area

- Elements in the external area such as covered walkway and open space.

(c) Setting

- (i) The setting of the LHTWC should be respected and preserved;
- (ii) The later-added refuse collection chamber, female toilet, disable toilet and steel shelter should be demolished; and
- (iii) New structure(s) to be built should be compatible but

distinguishable from the existing buildings and should not confuse the visitors from appreciating the heritage site. The overall mass of the new annex block should be compatible to the LTHWC.

(d) Documentation

Cartographic and photographic surveys to properly record the historic buildings will be conducted before and after the alteration works.

(e) Interpretation

“Heritage Interpretation Area” should be provided with display of historical documents, information, objects and artefacts etc., for interpreting the history and the architecture of the LHTWC, contributions of Sir Robert Ho Tung family, development of Kwu Tung area, and architectural significance of the buildings. An interpretation corner should be provided to interpret the roof structure covered by the timber suspended ceiling. The interpretation will be in form of scaled model and photos.

C. Key Design Proposal

7. The key proposed works for the revitalisation project are listed below:

(a) Overall site approach

- (i) The project intends to renovate and adaptively reuse the existing LTHWC as a heritage interpretation-cum-local ecology discovery centre with outdoor agriculture microcosm area;
- (ii) A new annex block will be constructed to accommodate toilets, electrical and mechanical plant rooms;
- (iii) The later-added refuse collection chamber, female toilet, disable toilet, steel shelter and disabled ramp will be demolished;
- (iv) Outdoor agriculture microcosm area will be provided including

Eco-Pond, Paddy Field, Silkworm Breeding Area, Vegetable Field, Fengshui Forest, Herb Garden and Agricultural Ecology Trails for public to experience the ecological environment so as to enhance the awareness of ecology preservation and sustainable development; and

- (v) Addition of a well to the rear side of the historic buildings for demonstration of the traditional way of drawing water.
- (b) Conservation and conversion works for transforming the LHTWC into a heritage interpretation-cum-local ecology discovery centre

- (i) Exterior

- No alteration works at Main Block will be carried out to the facades;
- Modification of one existing window for fresh air intake to the east side of Bungalow;
- Modification of one existing rainwater pipe at rear façade of Main Block to connect to new underground rainwater recycling system; and
- Some of the existing doors at Bungalow will be widen in order to fulfill the current statutory requirements on fire escape and barrier free access. The design of the existing doors will be followed.

- (ii) Interior

- The layout and setting of the interior will be largely retained, except for removing the following:
 - Later-added fiberboard partition wall in the Main Block; and
 - Partition walls of the existing toilets in the Main Block and Bungalow to accommodate the new use;

- Repair and restore the timber rafters, timber purlins and timber trusses and complete reroofing to match existing for both roofs at Main Block and Bungalow. Removal of later added temporary timber support if structure allows. Removal of existing water tank on the roof structure;
- Dismantle the later-added suspended ceilings of mineral fiber ceiling tiles; and
- Replacement of interior floor finishes (except terrazzo floor finishes at watchman room of Main Block) to suit new use.

(iii) Preserved features for heritage interpretation

- Building facades with timber doors and casement windows at Main Block and Bungalow;
- Chinese-styled roofs at Main Block and Bungalow including the timber roof truss system and structure;
- Building facades at Main Block and Bungalow;
- Stone doorcase and threshold of the main entrance;
- Colonnaded verandah at Main Block;
- Timber suspended ceiling at Main Block;
- Fireplaces at Main Block and Bungalow;
- Ceramic photographs of Sir Robert Ho Tung and Lady Ho Tung; and
- Original wooden arrow-shape directional signs.

(iv) Enhancement works for complying with the statutory requirements of the Buildings Ordinance (Cap. 123) or other modern-day requirements

- Provision of emergency vehicular access;
- Installation of air-conditioning outdoor unit at the side of the Bungalow;
- Fire services installation and plumbing system including associated plants to be sited in the new annex block;
- Installation of underground rainwater recycling system at the rear of the Main Block; and
- Replacement of the existing peripheral fencing with new fencing.

D. Mitigation Measures for the Conversion Works

8. For areas where impact of the conversion works could not be avoided, the following mitigation measures are to be implemented based on the conservation principles stated above:

- (a) The proposed new annex block will be located away from the LHTWC to minimise the visual impact to the historic building fabric. It will be designed in such a way that it will not overwhelm the original appearance of the LHTWC. The appearance of the new annex block will be compatible with and distinguishable from the existing building fabrics of the LHTWC. The height of the new block will not exceed the eaves lines of the historic buildings;
- (b) The location of the modification of existing window for fresh air intake will be at less prominent area. Original timber casement windows will be salvaged and stored for future use or interpretation. The new louvre will be of compatible design in terms of suitable material, colour and texture to minimise visual impact to building façade;
- (c) The location of the widening of existing doors at Bungalow will be at the open courtyard which is less prominent. Original timber doors will be salvaged and stored for future use or interpretation. New

doors will be of compatible design in terms of suitable material, colour and texture to minimise visual impact to building façade;

- (d) The existing rainwater pipe which is chosen for modification for connection to underground rainwater recycling system will be located at the less prominent location of the rear façade of the Main Block. The existing rainwater pipe will be re-used as far as possible. The alteration works will be of compatible design in terms of suitable material, colour and texture, and the rainwater recycling system will be placed underground to minimise visual impact to building façade;
- (e) The new floor finishes will be of compatible design in terms of suitable material, colour and texture to match with existing finishes, and new floor drains installed in the interior will be at less prominent area;
- (f) Fresh air intake units for Main Block will be installed on an additional platform above the timber suspended ceiling which will be supported by the load bearing brick walls with minimum intervention to avoid additional loading to roof structure. Air-conditioning ducts and sprinklers system for Main Block will be surface mounted on the existing roof structure. Air-conditioning ducts and ventilation fans for Bungalow will be surface mounted on the internal wall;
- (g) New air-conditioning pipelines will be grouped together and enter the building through the modified louvre window at Bungalow. The other building services pipelines including fire services, electrical plumbing and drainage will enter the building from underground minimising intervention to the external walls. Any internal service ductworks and machinery will be placed at inconspicuous locations;
- (h) New building services will be partially installed in underground under the annex block to reduce the space for accommodating such services at the LHTWC. The location of the new annex block will be chosen to maintain the openness of the open area and to minimise the visual impact to the LHTWC;
- (i) The well will be at the rear side of the historic buildings, and advice

from geotechnical engineer and structural engineer will be sought to ensure that the foundation and the structure of the historic buildings will not be adversely affected by the proposed works. The design will be distinguishable from the historic fabric which will not create a false sense of historical development;

- (j) The design of the new fencing will be understated in character and of compatible design, in terms of environmental friendly material, colour and texture, and in such a way that public viewing of the historic buildings from outside will not be blocked;
- (k) Cartographic and photographic surveys to record the LHTWC 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;
- (l) 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
- (m) Any renovation, alteration and maintenance works during the conversion and future operation of the building should follow the principles set out in the HIA.

CONCLUSION

9. The HIA concludes that the impact of the proposed works is considered acceptable and manageable with the proposed mitigation measures. The Eco-Learn Institute Limited will ensure that all works carried out for heritage conservation are to strictly comply with the requirements stipulated in the HIA as endorsed by the AMO.



Figure 1: Location Plan



Front Façade of Main Block



Front Façade of Bungalow



Rear Façade of Main Block



Rear Façade of Bungalow

Figure 2: Site Overview Photos



Figure 3: Site Plan

- - > AC pipes routing to enter building (partially underground)
- Underground Rainwater recycling system (approx. 3000L x 3000W mm)



Figure 4: Proposed Layout Plan for Existing Buildings

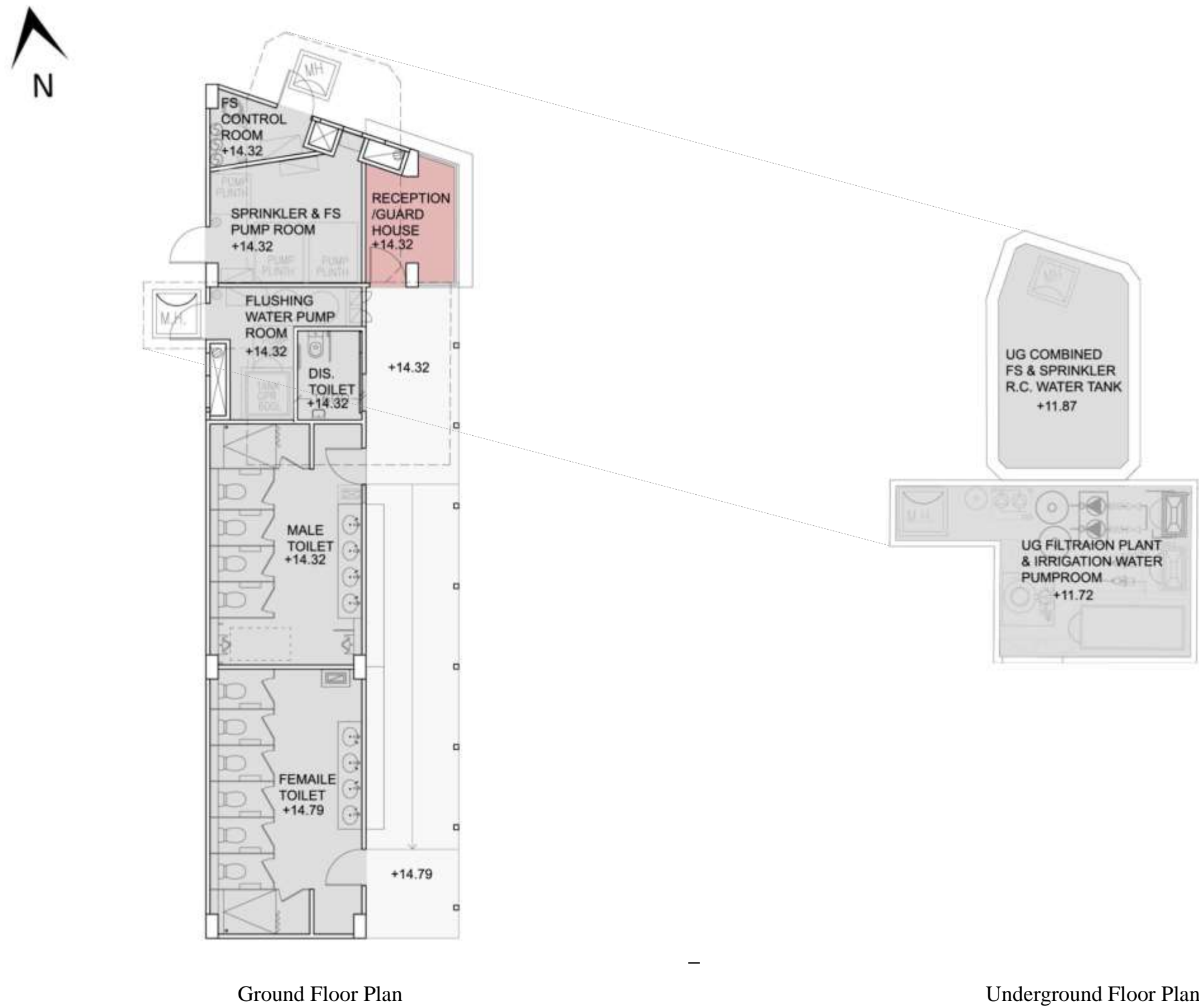


Figure 5: Proposed Layout Plan for New Annex Block



Figure 6: Perspective 1 of LHTWC



Figure 7: Perspective 2 of LHTWC



Figure 8: Perspective 3 of LHTWC