

**Heritage Impact Assessment in respect of
the Revitalisation of No. 12 School Street, Tai Hang, Causeway Bay**

BACKGROUND

Under Batch IV of the Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme (the “Revitalisation Scheme”), the Secretary for Development granted approval-in-principle in 2015 for the proposed conservation and adaptive re-use of No. 12 School Street (please refer to Figure 1 for the location plan) as “Tai Hang Fire Dragon Heritage Centre” submitted by the Tai Hang Residents’ Welfare Association.

2. The existing three-storey building of No. 12 School Street was re-constructed in 1949. Throughout the years, the building has been used for educational purpose by different schools and educational organisations. It has been left vacant since 2010. It was accorded a Grade 3 status by the Antiquities Advisory Board in December 2010. The building will be converted and revitalised into the Tai Hang Fire Dragon Heritage Centre with the history, origin, craft and story of the making of the Tai Hang Fire Dragon exhibited on the ground floor, and the upper two floors to accommodate thematic food and beverage facilities serving Hakka cuisine to commemorate the association of the Tai Hang Fire Dragon and the Hakka tradition (please refer to Figure 2 for the general views of the building).

3. Statement of Cultural Significance

(a) Historical Significance

- (i) The building was re-constructed in 1949 to replace an earlier pre-war building named “Hung Shing Yi Hok” (孔聖義學, literally “Confucius Free School for the Poor”) founded in the late Qing dynasty. The original school in late Qing dynasty was the first free school conducted by The Hong Kong Confucian Society, led by the then eminent leader of the community, Mr. Lau Chu-pak (劉鑄伯) (1867 – 1922). This school was funded by donations from local inhabitants.

Unfortunately, the school building was severely destroyed during the Japanese Occupation (1941 – 1945). After the war, the school was re-built on the same site through local donations by the Tai Hang Residents' Welfare Association (大坑坊眾福利會).

Mr. Li Wai-tong (李惠堂) (1905 – 1979), who had been crowned as the “King of Football in China” and was then head of the Tai Hang Residents' Welfare Association, participated in the re-construction of the school;

- (ii) The school rehabilitation ceremony was presided by Mr. Aw Boon Haw (胡文虎) (1882 – 1954) in 1949. Apart from being a Chinese entrepreneur and philanthropist residing in his Haw Par Mansion (虎豹別墅) in Tai Hang, he was also the honorary president of the Tai Hang Residents' Welfare Association at that time. The site evidences the association of these past celebrities with Tai Hang; and
- (iii) Being used for the provision of educational services over a century since the late Qing dynasty, the site witnesses the evolution of education system in Hong Kong. The historical association between Tai Hang and “Hung Shing Yi Hok”, which was set up in the early 20th century, is still remembered to-day and reflected in the street name “School Street” (書館街).

(b) Architectural Significance

- (i) The design of the building façade follows a very stringent geometric pattern with the main entrance in the middle. The combination of the single and double leaf iron casement windows creates a rhythm at the façade. There is a plastered string course above the first floor slab level. The only decoration on the side elevation is the symmetrical pattern. Flat roof, set-back middle façade portion, string course and iron casement windows are all Art Deco features which were the predominant architectural style in Hong Kong when the building was re-constructed; and
- (ii) The simple building form is a significant example of the building

design adopted immediately after the Japanese Occupation. While the re-construction works were carried out under tight resources, the building still incorporated the contemporary architectural style with minimal Art Deco features. Internally, the rooms are plain and devoid of architectural detail. In short, the building is utilitarian and functional according to the dictates of Modernism.

(c) Social Significance

- (i) The building has close relationship with the Tai Hang community. In the early days of Hong Kong, the poor seldom had the chance to receive formal education. The establishment of “Hung Shing Yi Hok” in the 20th century was a significant event for the local community;
- (ii) The name “School Street” (書館街) indicates the significance of the Confucius free school in providing free education for the poor; and
- (iii) The founding of the school in the late Qing dynasty and re-construction of the school in 1949 were important events in the Tai Hang community. The funding for the founding and re-construction was by the collective contribution of the kai-fong (街坊, neighbourhood), and the names of the contributors were recorded in three stone plaques fixed on the wall at the ground floor.

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

4. According to Technical Circular (Works) No. 6/2009 regarding the Heritage Impact Assessment (“HIA”) mechanism introduced by the Development Bureau (“DEVB”), 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 Antiquities and Monuments Office (“AMO”) laid down in the Resource Kit of Batch IV of the Revitalisation Scheme. The subject HIA has been completed and submitted

to AMO.

A. Project Proposal

5. Under the Consolidated Project Proposal submitted by the Tai Hang Residents' Welfare Association, No. 12 School Street will be revitalised into the Tai Hang Fire Dragon Heritage Centre to showcase the Tai Hang Fire Dragon, one of the four local items inscribed onto the third national list of intangible cultural heritage (第三批國家級非物質文化遺產名錄). The following revitalisation works and programmes are proposed:

- (a) The heritage of the Tai Hang Fire Dragon will be presented in the display area on the ground floor, including the origin and history, the craft and story of making the Tai Hang Fire Dragon, and the parade route (please refer to Figure 3 for the ground floor plan);
- (b) The Tai Hang Fire Dragon is associated with the Hakka. As such, Hakka cuisine will be served on the first and second floors to commemorate the Hakka tradition (please refer to Figures 4 and 5 for the first and second floor plans respectively); and
- (c) The roof will be used as leisure area during normal days and viewing platform during the Tai Hang Fire Dragon parade (please refer to Figure 6 for the roof plan).

B. Conservation Principles

6. According to the HIA report, the conservation policies to conserve and interpret No. 12 School Street are as follows:

(a) Building Use

The new use of No. 12 School Street should be compatible with its original use, which means that it should not jeopardise the image of the original school building and any unnecessary interventions to the historic building should be avoided.

(b) Preservation of Building Fabrics

Authenticity of the heritage of No. 12 School Street and its architectural merits should be maintained with minimal intervention. The key Character Defining Elements (“CDEs”) should be repaired as necessary and preserved in-situ as far as possible, such as:

- (i) the “rectangular box” shaped building form with set-backs on the second floor on three sides creating a narrow continuous flat roof running through the entire second floor;
- (ii) the front elevation facing School Street with the single and double leaf iron casement windows with ornamental grilles rhythm, the horizontal projections (typhoon canopies) above the windows, the canopy above the main entrance with cornices, and the ornamental iron grille in the middle of the second floor parapet wall;
- (iii) the side and rear elevations facing Brown Street and First Lane respectively with double leaf iron casement windows with ornamental grilles rhythm, and the horizontal projections (typhoon canopies) above the windows. A portion of the building at rear elevation is set back to form a light well above ground floor;
- (iv) the Chinese characters of previous school name on the second floor parapet wall facing Brown Street. The wordings are currently covered by paint;
- (v) the cast iron rainwater downpipe with hoppers, and the clayware rainwater downpipe with hopper;
- (vi) the internal staircase with the solid balustrade leading from ground floor to roof;
- (vii) the double leaf timber main entrance door with fanlight on the ground floor; and

- (viii) the four stones plaques affixed on the wall of the main room on the ground floor and on the external wall besides the main entrance, commemorating the founding of the “Hung Shing Yi Hok” in the Qing dynasty, and the re-construction of the school in 1949.

(c) Setting

- (i) The setting of No. 12 School Street should be respected and preserved; and
- (ii) New structure(s) to be added should be compatible but distinguishable from the existing building and should not confuse the visitors appreciating the original historic building.

(d) Documentation

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

(e) Interpretation

- (i) The history and architecture of No. 12 School Street, and the intangible cultural heritage of Tai Hang Fire Dragon should be shown in the heritage display area; and
- (ii) Interpretation in the form of guided tours, workshops and activities should be provided for visitors to appreciate and experience the Tai Hang Fire Dragon parade as well as the historic buildings in the Tai Hang area.

C. Key Design Proposal

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

(a) Overall site approach

The project intends to renovate and adaptively re-use No. 12 School

Street as the Tai Hang Fire Dragon Heritage Centre with the provision of a heritage display area as well as food and beverage facilities.

(b) Conservation and conversion works for transforming No. 12 School Street into the Tai Hang Fire Dragon Heritage Centre

(i) Exterior

- No addition and alteration works will be carried out at the facades, except the following:
 - construct a new lift shaft at the light well of rear elevation engraved with the Tai Hang Fire Dragon icon by the removal of the one-storey high fence wall and toilet facilities. The existing window openings on the first and second floors will be enlarged to facilitate access to the new lift lobby. The lift shaft will be constructed with steel structure covered by aluminium cladding with perforated dragon figure. The façade of the adjoining lift lobbies will be constructed with clear glass;
 - addition of a simulated “Fire Dragon Joss Stick Pearl” on the roof of the new lift shaft. The “Pearl” will be made of stainless steel tubes with fibre optics at the tips to simulate the incense effect;
 - addition of the name and logo of the Tai Hang Fire Dragon Heritage Centre, and the re-construction year of the building (i.e. 1949) on the front elevation;
 - restore the existing aluminium double leaf windows at side and rear elevations to iron casement windows with ornamental grilles matching the existing style;
 - open up the blocked openings and restore the existing aluminium French windows on the second floor flat roof to French windows with materials and design compatible to the period in which the building was re-constructed; and

- addition of building services inlets/cabinets at the side and rear elevations of the ground floor.

(ii) Interior

- The layout and setting of the interior will be largely retained, except the following:
 - addition of an internal staircase from the ground floor to the second floor;
 - addition of kitchens on the first and second floors, which are separate from the sitting areas of the restaurants by fire-rated partition. Form floor opening at second floor slab to accommodate dumbwaiter inside kitchens; and
 - re-plan the toilets on the ground floor.
- Replacement of interior floor finishes, with the exception of the timber parquet floor on the ground floor, to suit new use.

(iii) Preserved features for heritage interpretation

- the front elevation facing School Street with the single and double leaf iron casement windows with ornamental grilles rhythm, the horizontal projections (typhoon canopies) above the windows, the canopy above the main entrance with the cornices, and the ornamental iron grille at the middle of the second floor parapet wall;
- the side and rear elevations facing Brown Street and First Lane respectively with double leaf iron casement windows with ornamental grilles rhythm, and the horizontal projections (typhoon canopies) above the window;
- the Chinese characters of previous school name on the second floor parapet wall facing Brown Street will be preserved and partially exposed, exact Chinese wordings to be confirmed after

the paint was removed during site works;

- the cast iron rainwater downpipe with hoppers;
- the internal staircase with the solid balustrade leading from the ground floor to the roof;
- the double leaf timber main entrance door with fanlight on the ground floor; and
- the four stone plaques affixed on the wall of the main room on the ground floor and on the external wall besides the main entrance, commemorating the founding of the “Hung Shing Yi Hok” in the late Qing dynasty and the re-construction of the school in 1949.

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

- addition of lift for barrier free access (BFA) to first floor, second floor and roof at the existing light well of rear elevation;
- re-construction of the roof slab with “Ytong panel” supported by new steel I-beams to suit the loading capacity of the new use;
- up-grading of the existing staircase by adding handrails on both sides, protective barriers on top of the parapet and protected lobbies at the staircase landings to comply with the BFA, means of escape (MOE) and protective barrier requirements;
- addition of new internal means of escape staircase leading from the ground floor to the second floor to comply with MOE requirements by breaking up part of the existing first and second floor slabs;
- forming new openings and widening of existing door openings on existing walls on the first and second floors to comply with

BFA and MOE requirements;

- modification of the existing windows at side and rear elevations for fresh air intake and exhaust;
- upgrading of the fire resistance rating for the floor slabs and beams;
- upgrading of the fire resistance rating for some of the existing windows;
- demolition of the later-added kitchen and construction of new building services rooms on roof;
- provision of fire services installation and plumbing system; and
- installation of air-conditioning system.

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 lift tower will be constructed at the existing light well at the rear elevation so that it will not overwhelm the front elevation of the building. The appearance of the lift tower will be compatible with and distinguishable from the building fabric of the building;
- (b) The fire-rated glazing to be installed at the internal side of the iron windows at the rear elevation light well, which will become part of the lift shaft, will not affect the position and appearance of the original windows;
- (c) The replacement of railing on top of the second floor verandah and roof solid parapet wall will be simple and distinguishable from the existing building fabric;

- (d) Louvres for fresh air in-take and exhaust will be installed behind the existing grilles of iron casement windows, and the design will be compatible with the existing iron casement windows to minimise the visual impact to the building elevations;
- (e) The new inlets/cabinets will be located at the less predominant side and rear elevations. The external wall below the windows will be taken down and converted to accommodate these inlets/cabinets;
- (f) The Chinese characters of previous school name on the second floor parapet wall facing Brown Street will be preserved and partially exposed with appropriate interpretation to avoid confusion while maintaining the original outlook;
- (g) The structural strengthening work for the roof slab will adopt “Ytong panel” system to minimise the impact to the existing structure and outlook. The major supporting steel I-beams will be positioned following the existing framing of the roof slab;
- (h) The air-conditioning outdoor units will be placed on the roof nearby the First Lane. Since these units are higher than the roof parapet wall and will be visible to the surroundings, they will be screened by a fence so as to minimise the visual impact to the existing building. The design of the screen will be simple aluminum louvers and distinguishable from the existing building fabric;
- (i) The size of the proposed fire services water tank will be minimised to reduce adverse impact on the building. An application to the Fire Services Department for relaxation on the non-provision of fire services water tank for sprinkler system using direct feed system will be made;
- (j) Cartographic and photographic surveys to record No. 12 School Street will be conducted before the commencement of conversion works. A set of record drawings will be prepared and submitted to AMO after completion of the conversion works;
- (k) 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 period; and

- (l) 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 Tai Hang Fire Dragon Heritage Centre 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 AMO.

Tai Hang Fire Dragon Heritage Centre Limited
June 2017

Figure 1: Location Plan



External (front and side) View,
(view from corner of School Street and Brown Street)



External (front) View,
(view from corner of School Street and Warren Street)



External (side and rear) View,
(view from corner of Brown Street and First Lane)



External (rear) View,
(view from First Lane)

Figure 2: Overview Photos of the Building

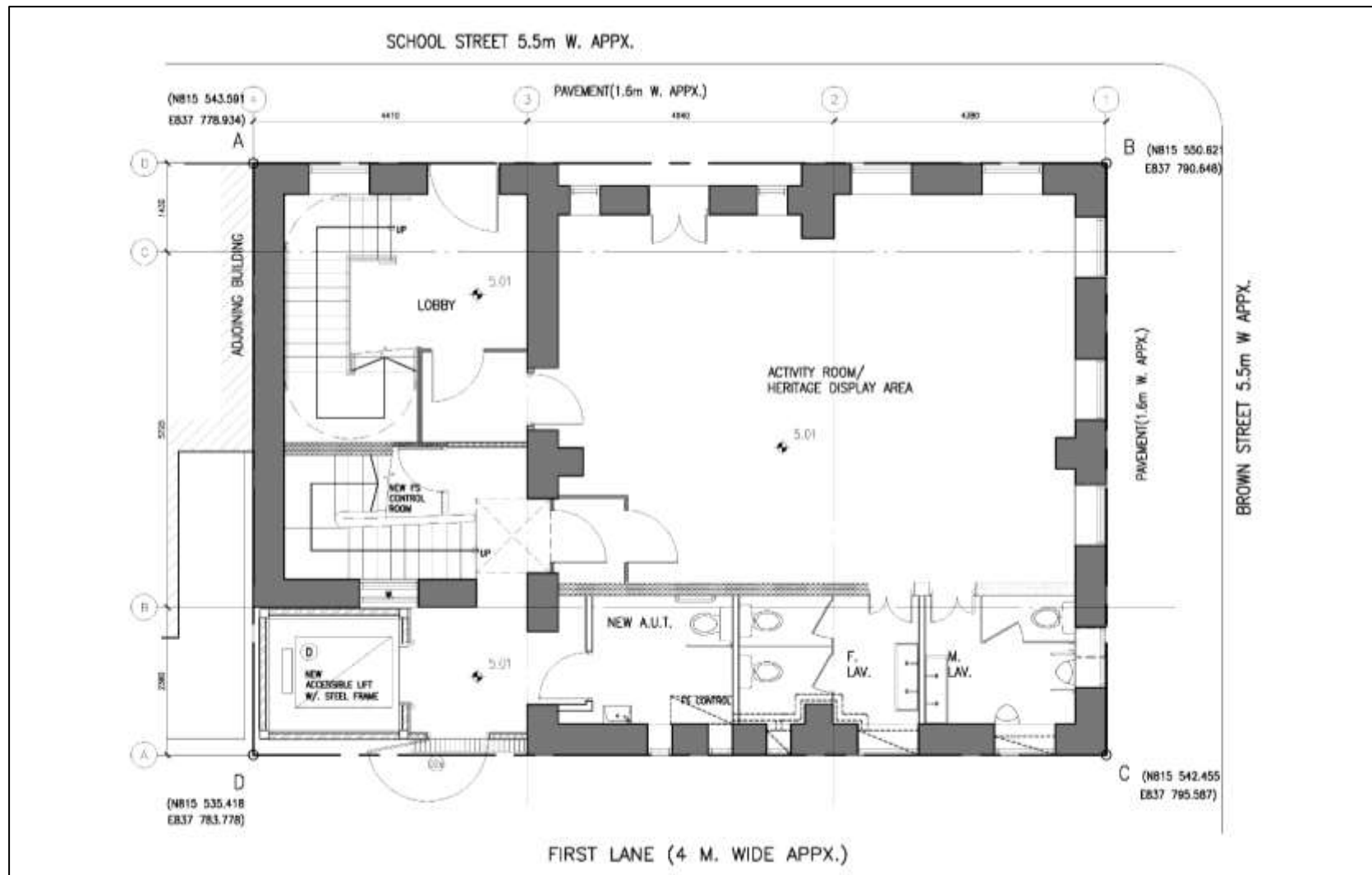


Figure 3: Proposed Ground Floor Plan

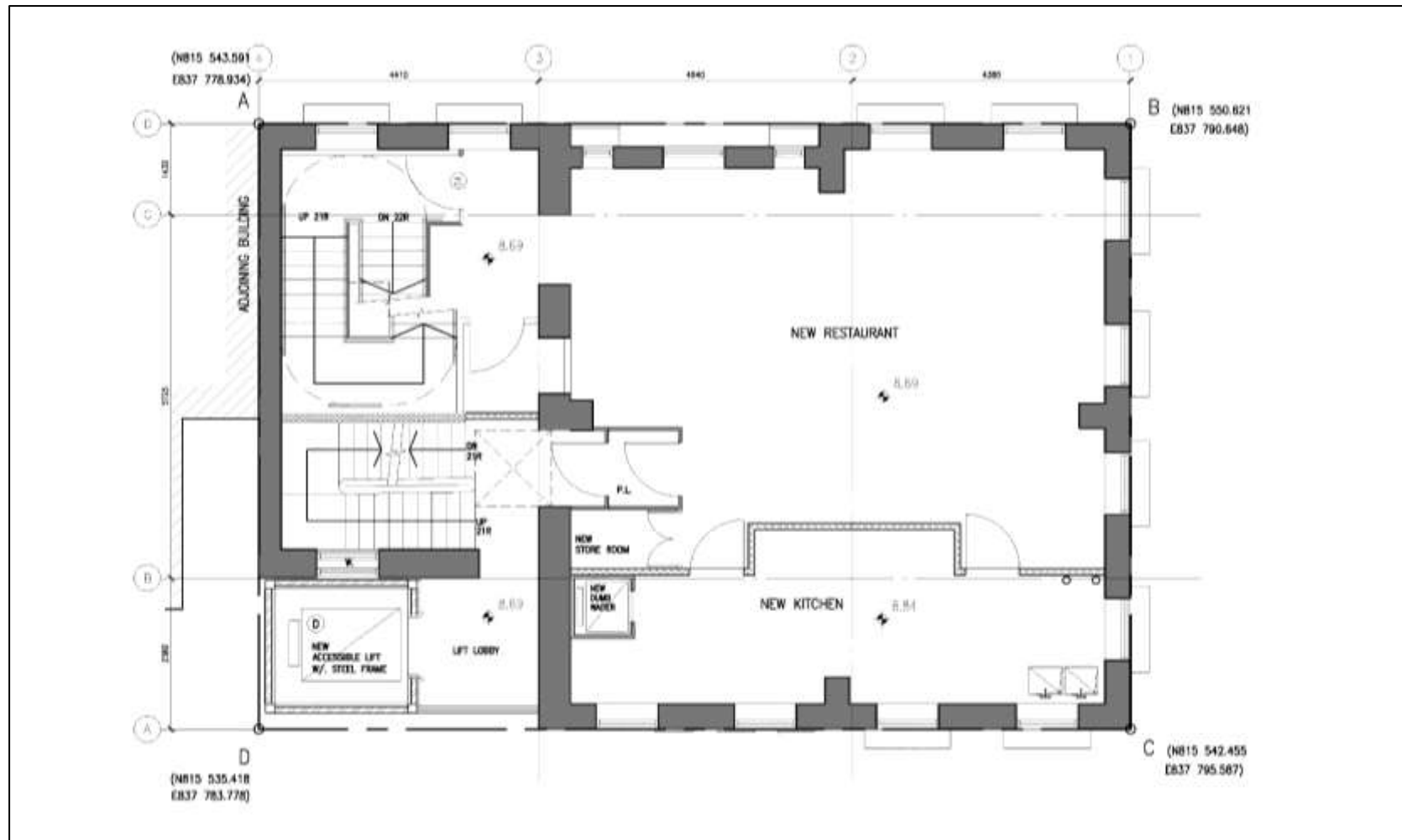


Figure 4: Proposed First Floor Plan

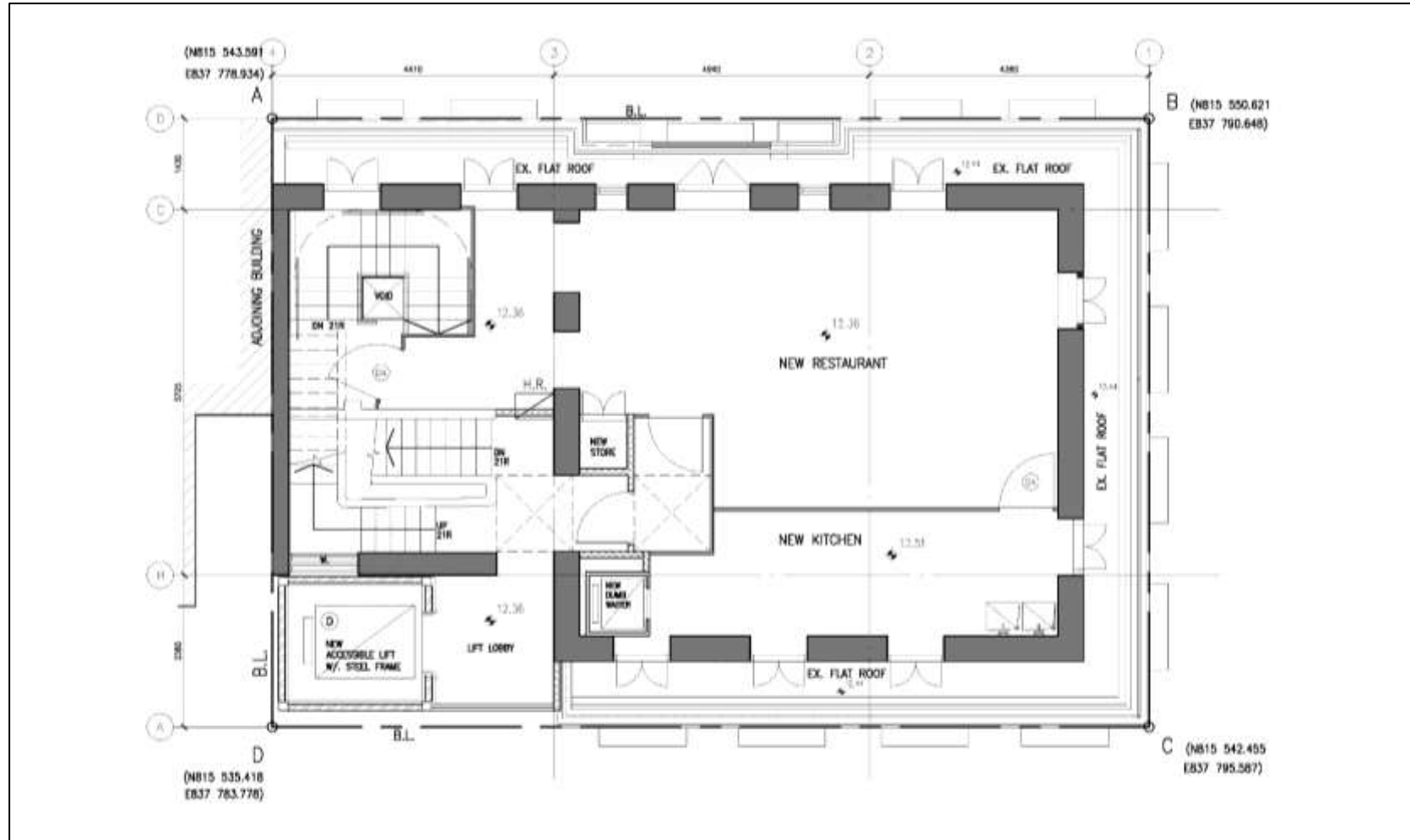


Figure 5: Proposed Second Floor Plan

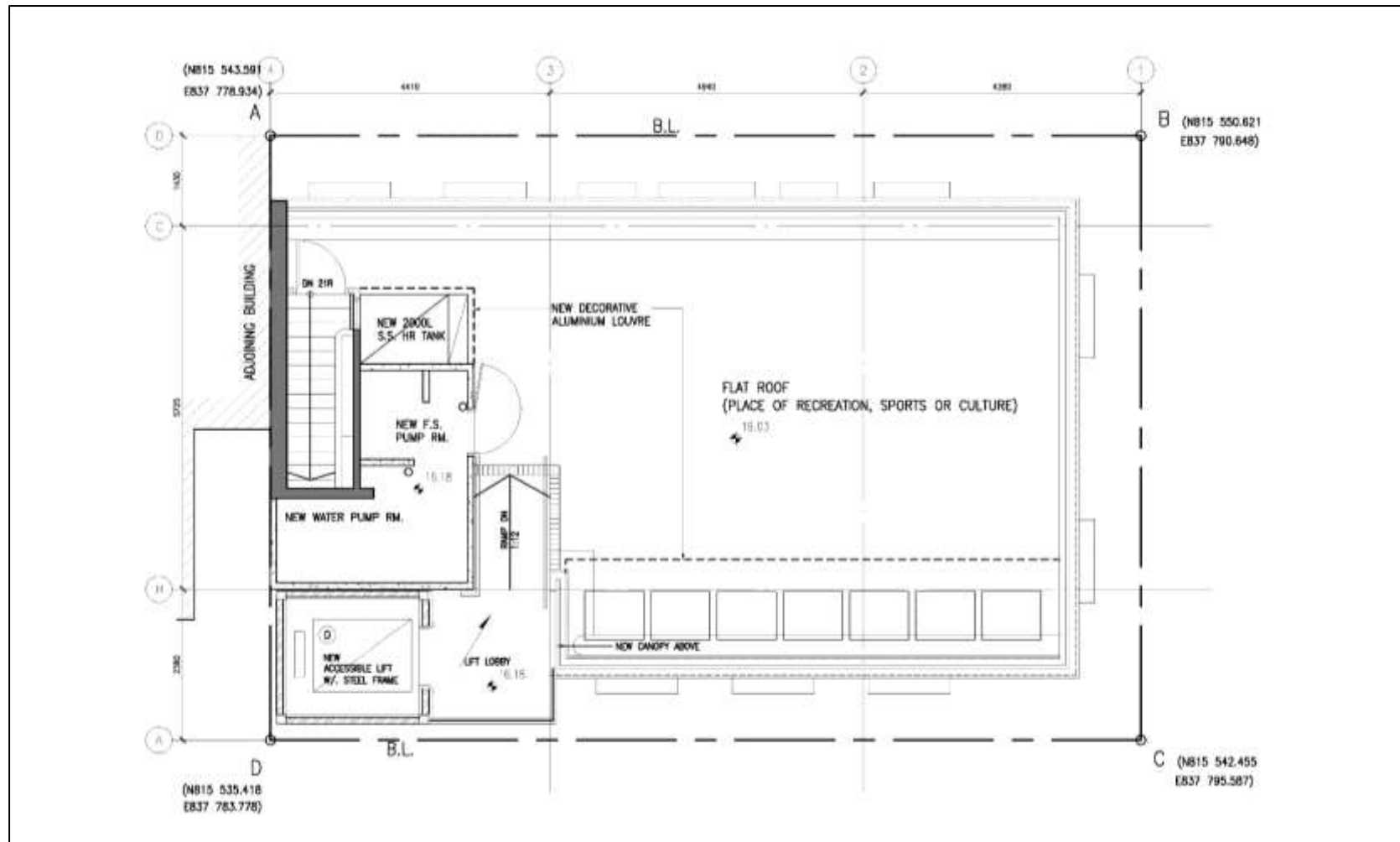


Figure 6: Proposed Roof Plan

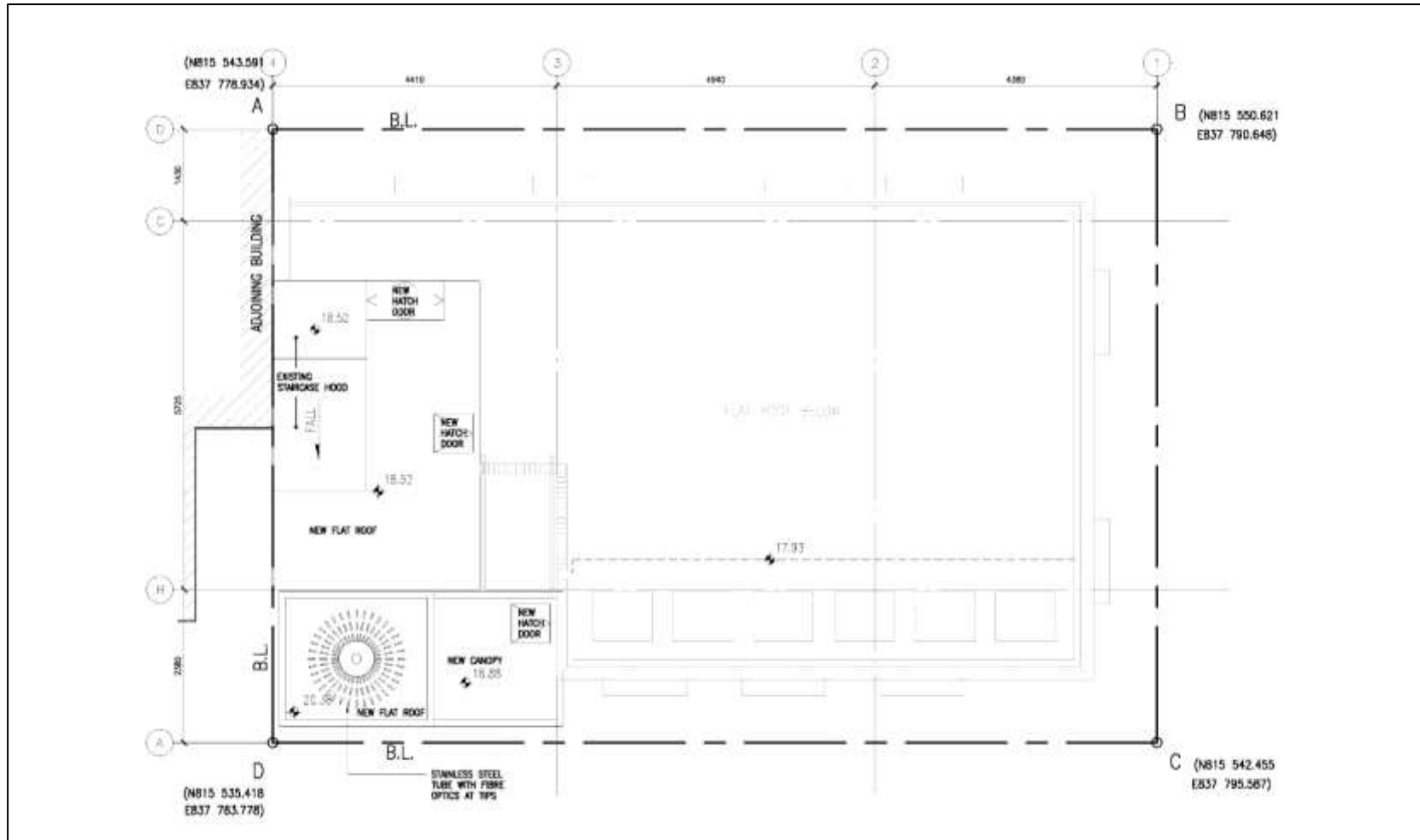


Figure 7: Proposed Upper Roof Plan



Figure 8: Perspective from Corner of School Street and Brown Street



Figure 9: Perspective from School Street



Figure 10: Perspective from Corner of Brown Street and First Lane



Figure 11: Perspective from First Lane



Figure 12: Front Elevation Facing School Street

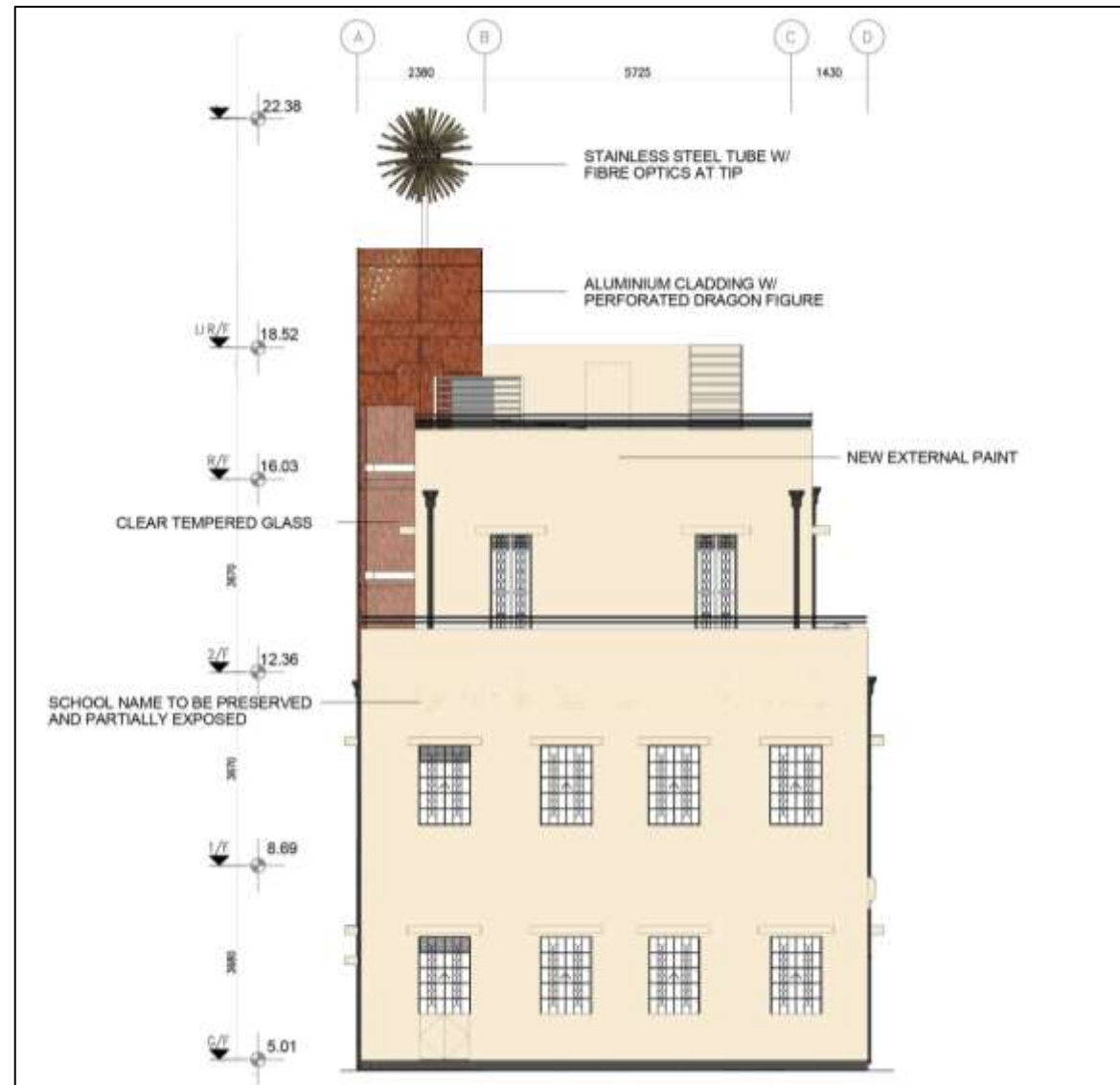


Figure 13: Side Elevation Facing Brown Street

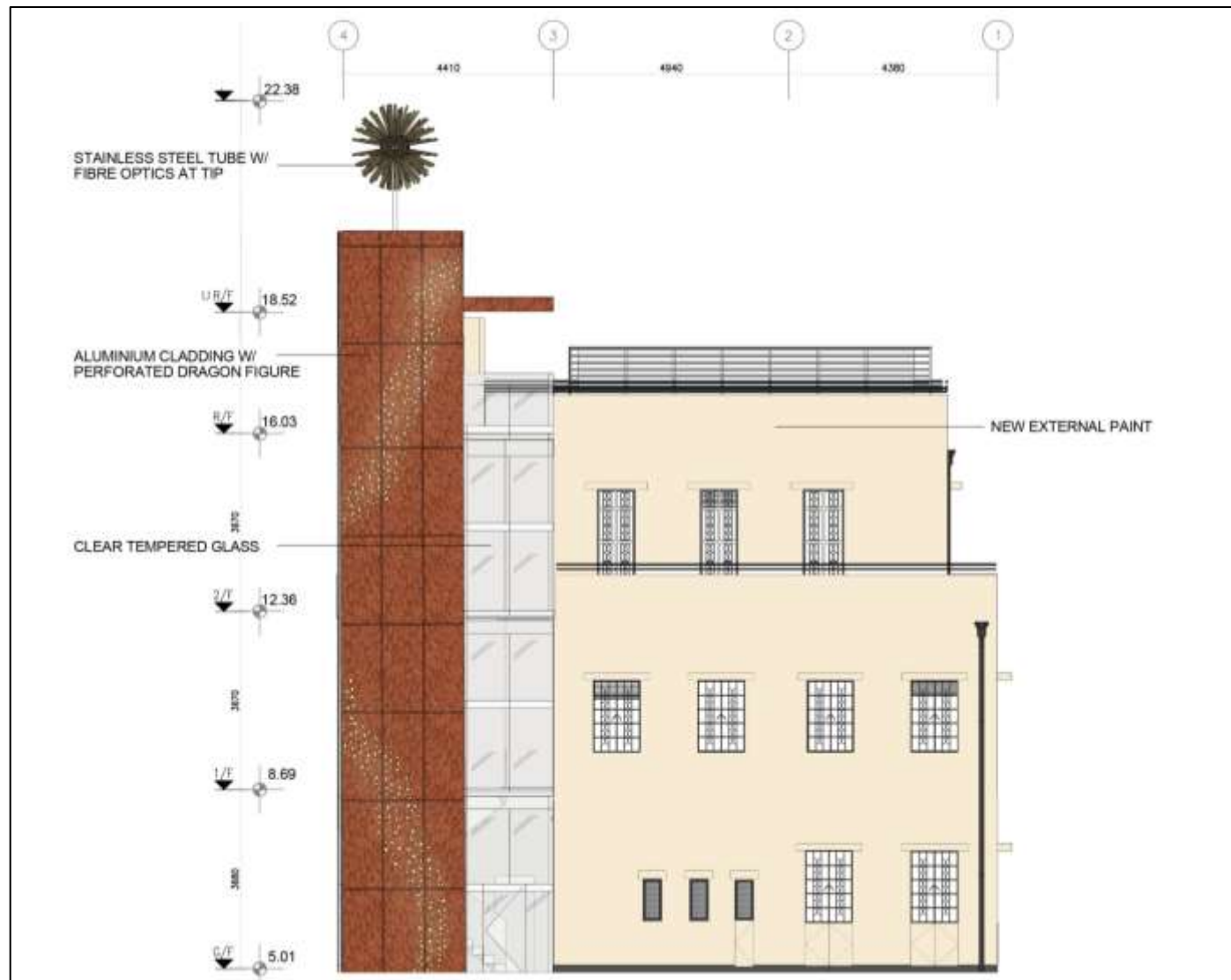


Figure 14: Rear Elevation Facing First Lane

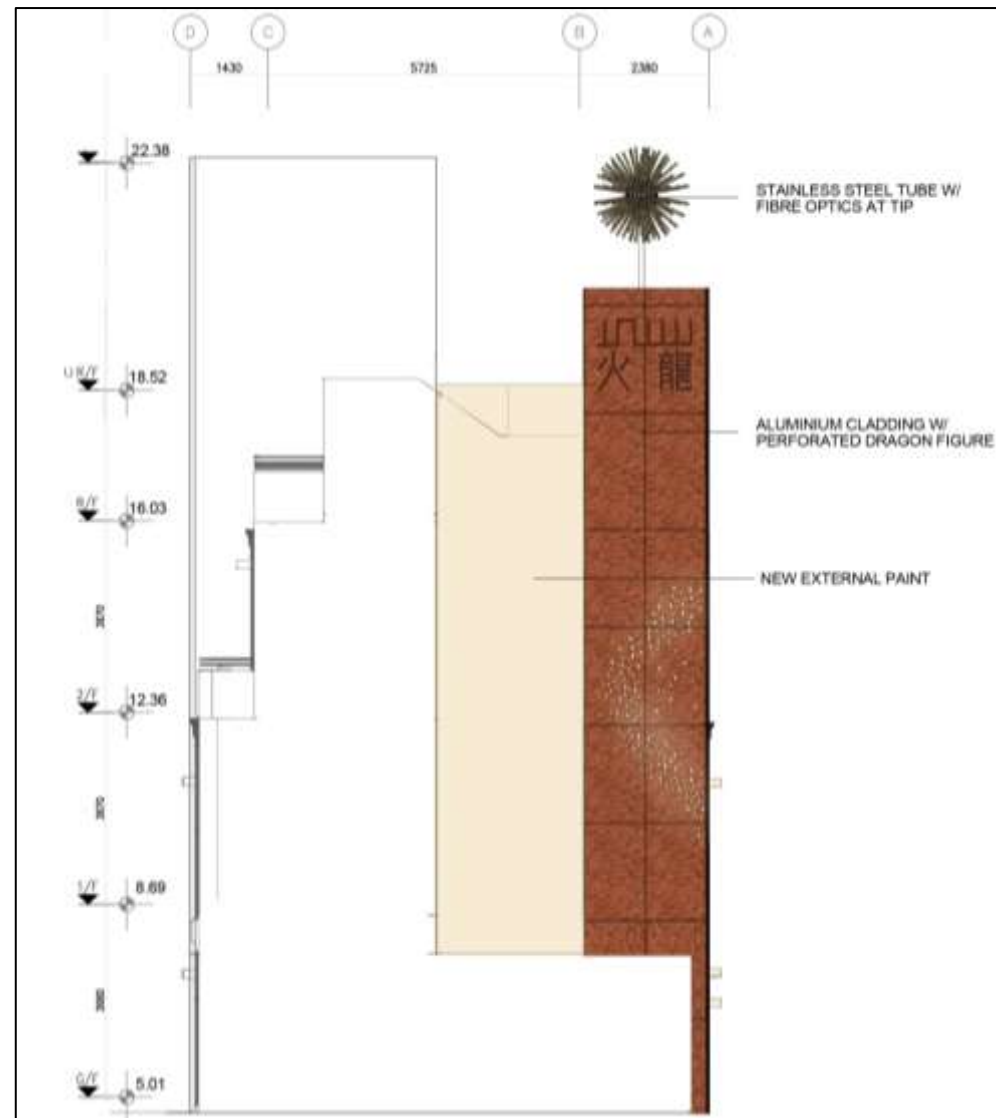


Figure 15: Side Elevation Facing Adjoining Building