

**Antiquities and Monuments Office's Comments
on the Heritage Impact Assessment in respect of
the Revitalisation of the Watervale House, Former Gordon Hard Camp**

The Antiquities and Monuments Office (“AMO”) has reviewed the findings set out in the Heritage Impact Assessment (“HIA”) report in respect of the revitalisation of the Watervale House, Former Gordon Hard Camp (“Watervale House”) into “Tuen Mun Soul Oasis” which comprises a single-storey Main Block¹ and a two-storey Extension, and has the following comments:

- (a) the proposal has adopted the principles of minimal intervention and reversibility for the new additions such that changes / disturbance to the Watervale House can be kept to a minimum. As such, the proposal is agreeable;
- (b) the façades of Main Block will be kept intact except for minor alterations of windows and openings at less prominent locations to suit new uses and meet modern day statutory requirements. The existing plywood sheathings blocking the windows between pilasters will be removed to reveal the original window openings. Existing steel windows with later alternations will be repaired and restored to match with existing period style. These approaches are able to reveal the original building façade design which is a key character defining element to demonstrate the architectural value of the Watervale House, and is commendable;
- (c) the original rooms in Main Block (Ante room, Room 1 and Liquor Store) will be converted into interpretation rooms for displaying the architectural significance of the building, history of the previous owners, British troops and Gurkha culture, history of Tuen Mun area, as well as the revitalisation process. This approach, which allows the public to have a better understanding of the history of the site, is agreeable;
- (d) subject to the approval of the Building Authority, the previously removed original brickwork archways in the Ante Hall of Main Block will be restored, with the later-added steel portal structures to be removed. Historical research will be conducted to understand the

¹ The Main Block of Watervale House is a Grade 2 historic building.

original design and locations. This approach can reveal the original spatial arrangement and structural load path, as well as to manifest the architectural value of the interior of the historic building, and is commendable;

- (e) the minor interior alterations for Main Block are mainly proposed at the rear façades and the rear area where it is less prominent for providing barrier free access (“BFA”) to suit new uses and meet modern day statutory requirements. As such, the original layout can still be retained in general. New access ramps will be located at less prominent locations. The design of the new ramps is simple and minimal which will not overwhelm the historic building. This arrangement is acceptable;
- (f) localised bottom slabs of the ribbed slab system are opened-up with exposed ceiling soffit and beam structure due to preceding on-site tests. The concerned bottom slabs would be reinstated with glass-fiber reinforced concrete (“GRC”) panel, which is compatible with but distinguishable from the historic fabric. Subject to the approval of the Building Authority, the remaining ribbed slab system would be generally kept intact, except localised repairing works, with original material, texture, colour and details, would be carried out to maintain the structural integrity where necessary. New false ceiling is proposed to accommodate the modern day requirements, such that no coring or forming of new openings on the ribbed slab system is required for the installation of building services. The extent of the false ceiling is minimum, with edges setback from the peripheral to reveal the original ceiling mouldings at the soffit. This arrangement is acceptable;
- (g) the existing later-added metal stair will be removed and a new glazed skylight is proposed at the open corridor between Main Block and Extension to suit the new use. The structural supports of the new skylight are fixed on the parapet wall of the Extension, such that the façades of Main Block could remain intact, and the disturbance to the historic fabric could be kept minimum. The top height level of the new skylight is lower than the projecting eaves of Main Block, such that the new skylight is invisible when viewing from the open space. This approach is acceptable;

- (h) a new BFA path is proposed in the external landscape area to improve the accessibility from the historic building to the two landscaping areas abutting the driveway. The setting of the BFA path would suit the general topography of the site, the design of the railing should be simple and minimal which will not overwhelm the existing soft landscape. Fire services tanks and pump room are proposed at the external landscape area for complying with modern day statutory requirements. They are located at a less prominent location of the site and will be blended into the landscape to minimise visual impact to the historic building. This approach is acceptable;
- (i) for the terrace at south, public access will be restricted by management approach to avoid physical and visual impact caused by adding a new up-to-standard balustrade along the terrace edge to meet modern day statutory requirements, and is subject to the approval of the Building Authority. Otherwise, new railing with simple and compatible with but distinguishable from the historic fabric design would be adopted. This approach is acceptable; and
- (j) cartographic and photographic surveys to record the Watervale House will be conducted before commencement of the proposed works, and the findings will be sent to AMO for record.

2. In addition to the mitigation measures devised in the HIA report, AMO has further suggested the following enhancement measures which the project proponent has agreed to undertake:

- (a) detailed proposal for restoration of the brickwork archways in Main Block should be submitted for AMO's consideration. Subject to the conditions imposed by the Building Authority, in the event that the proposed restoration works might impose irreversible disruptive impact to the historic fabric, alternative structural system and / or materials compatible with the original appearance, dimensions and setting out might be considered. Details of the works including the method statement should be submitted for AMO's agreement;
- (b) details of reinstatement and repairing of the ribbed slab system, including but not limited to the design, material and method statement,

- should be submitted for AMO's agreement;
- (c) details of modification works to the existing windows and doors including but not limited to alteration of existing openings and replacement of windows and doors should be submitted for AMO's agreement;
 - (d) design details of the alteration and addition works to suit modern day statutory requirements, including but not limited to fall arrest system at the roofs, air conditioning units, exhaust fans, fire services cabinets, etc. should be submitted for AMO's agreement;
 - (e) design details of the localised strengthening works, including but not limited to enlargement of the wall opening at north façade of Main Block for provide BFA to the interior and the mass concrete strengthening works at the underside of the terrace, should be submitted for AMO's agreement;
 - (f) design details of the new skylight at the open corridor, including but not limited to the sizes, materials, fixing details and colour scheme, should be submitted for AMO's agreement;
 - (g) design details of the new BFA path, the fire services tanks and pump room in the landscaping area, including but not limited to the material, finishes, design and colour scheme, should be submitted for AMO's agreement;
 - (h) landscape design, with street furniture if any, at the open space should be submitted for AMO's agreement;
 - (i) detailed design of the fence wall and gate along the site boundary should be submitted for AMO's agreement;
 - (j) the installations and ducting for the building services facilities should be at less prominent locations to minimise the visual impact to the Watervale House. The routings should also be carefully designed to minimise the damage to the existing building fabrics. Details of the works should be submitted for AMO's comment; and
 - (k) to ensure that the mitigation measures recommended in the HIA

report are properly implemented, a heritage consultant should be appointed by The Tuen Mun Soul Oasis Foundation Limited to monitor the implementation and record any changes and variations. Progress reports should be prepared by the heritage consultant for AMO's noting and action as appropriate.

Antiquities and Monuments Office

December 2020

Ref: AMO 22-3/0