

For discussion  
on 10 March 2022

BOARD PAPER  
AAB/18/2021-22

**MEMORANDUM FOR THE  
ANTIQUITIES ADVISORY BOARD**

**DECLARATION OF  
THREE HISTORIC BUILDINGS AS MONUMENTS**

**PURPOSE**

This paper seeks Members' advice on the proposal to declare the following three Grade 1 historic buildings as monuments under section 3(1) of the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (Cap. 53) (the "Ordinance"):

- (a) Jamia Mosque (回教清真禮拜總堂) at No. 30 Shelley Street, Central, Hong Kong;
- (b) Lui Seng Chun (雷生春) at No. 119 Lai Chi Kok Road, Mong Kok, Kowloon; and
- (c) Hong Kong City Hall (香港大會堂) at No. 5 Edinburgh Place, Central, Hong Kong.

**HERITAGE VALUE**

Jamia Mosque

2. Built between 1915 and 1916 with donations from Haji Mohamed Essack Elias, a Bombay merchant, to replace the old mosque on the same site on Shelley Street, Jamia Mosque is now the oldest mosque in Hong Kong.<sup>1</sup> The old mosque on the same site was built in 1849 to provide a place of worship for the Muslims who mainly came from the Indian subcontinent to Hong Kong and were primarily merchants, sailors, soldiers, policemen and prison guards. With the rapid growth of the Muslim community in Hong Kong, the old mosque was

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<sup>1</sup> Reports of the Director of Public Works for the years 1915 and 1916 record that the construction of Jamia Mosque commenced in 1915 and completed in 1916.

subsequently demolished and replaced by Jamia Mosque which could accommodate a congregation of around 400 people.

3. Jamia Mosque is constructed in concrete and bricks with an elongated rectangular plan built along an east-west axis, with its entrance at the east and the *Qibla* wall at the west facing the Holy Kaaba in Makkah, Saudi Arabia which is the birth place of Holy Prophet Muhammad. Rich Islamic mosque architectural features can be seen at Jamia Mosque, such as the minaret crowned by a dome decorated with finial, the pointed multifoil archways at the entrance portico and doorways, the pointed arches above the coloured glazed windows, the octagonal dome at the center of the prayer hall, the *mihrab* on the *Qibla* wall and the *Kufic* calligraphic motifs on the walls. Jamia Mosque is significant in witnessing the growth of the Muslim community in Hong Kong and it remains as an important place of worship and gathering for the Muslims in Hong Kong.

#### Lui Seng Chun

4. Lui Seng Chun is a four-storey *tong lau* (唐樓) (literally meaning Chinese-style building, the local term for Hong Kong shophouse typology) located on a triangular site in Mong Kok, Kowloon. It was built in 1931 and owned by Lui Leung (雷亮, 1863-1944), one of the founders of The Kowloon Motor Bus Company (1933) Limited. The Lui family ran a Chinese medicine shop on the ground floor and lived on the upper floors. The medicine shop was closed a few years after Lui Leung passed away in 1944. In 2003, the Lui family donated the building to the Hong Kong Government for preservation. The donation is unprecedented in Hong Kong.

5. Lui Seng Chun was designed by W. H. Bourne. It is a building of neo-classical style that mixed with Art Deco elements by sweeping horizontal lines and robust classical elements. Its main front elevation is in a curved design.

6. Lui Seng Chun has been revitalised as a Chinese medicine and healthcare center and operated by the Hong Kong Baptist University since 2012. Apart from resuming the original function of Lui Seng Chun as a medical-related facility, the original architectural form and elements like granite columns, terrazzo exterior wall, flooring tiles, and staircase are well preserved. Lui Seng Chun is a testimony to the history of a well-respected family, including the economic activities of their Chinese medicine shop around the Second World War.

## Hong Kong City Hall

7. The Hong Kong City Hall (“City Hall”) located at the Edinburgh Place is the second city hall in Hong Kong. It was officially opened by Governor Sir Robert Black on 2 March 1962. Since its opening, the City Hall which is the first multi-purpose cultural complex for all citizens in Hong Kong, has been a venue for many historical events like the inauguration ceremonies of five governors of Hong Kong, a cradle for local performers and a testimony for witnessing the arts and cultural development of Hong Kong. Besides, it also testifies the unprecedented commitment of the Government to undertake the responsibility of enriching the cultural lives and improving the living standards of citizens by creating a hub of cultural activities and municipal services.

8. The City Hall is an outstanding example of Modernist architecture which adopts a modest design that focuses on fulfilling the functions of the building. It comprises the Low Block, the Memorial Garden and the High Block which are well-connected through a covered walkway. The Low Block houses a concert hall, a theatre and an exhibition gallery while the High Block houses a marriage registry, a public library and a recital hall. The Memorial Garden and the 12-sided Memorial Shrine located at the center of garden are dedicated to the soldiers and citizens who sacrificed their lives in defending Hong Kong in the Second World War. Located at the harbour front, the architects ensured all facilities, except the enclosed auditoria, have sea views and thus created a sense of unlimited space. The City Hall is a rare and significant example of Modernist architecture, which sets an architectural trend in Hong Kong and has become a landmark design for Hong Kong architecture.

9. Lui Seng Chun and City Hall are situated on government land whereas Jamia Mosque is on private lot. The appraisals and photographs of the three historic buildings are at **Annexes A to F**.

## **GRADING AND DECLARATION**

10. In recognition of their heritage values, the Board accorded Grade 1 status to Lui Seng Chun and City Hall on 18 December 2009 and to Jamia Mosque on 17 May 2010.

11. At the meeting on 26 November 2008, the Board endorsed the establishment of formal relationship between the statutory monument declaration system and the administrative grading system for historic buildings.

Under the endorsed arrangement, Grade 1 buildings, defined as “buildings of outstanding merit, which every effort should be made to preserve if possible”, are included in a pool of highly valuable heritage buildings for consideration by Antiquities Authority (i.e. Secretary for Development) as to whether some of these may have reached the “high threshold” of monuments for statutory protection under the Ordinance.

12. The three historic buildings, i.e. Jamia Mosque, Lui Seng Chun and City Hall as set out in paragraphs 2 to 8 above, have significant heritage value. They have reached the “high threshold” to be declared as monuments for permanent protection under the Ordinance. Consent for the intended declaration has been obtained from the respective owner, management department and institution.

### **ADVICE SOUGHT**

13. In accordance with section 3(1) of the Ordinance, “the Authority may, after consultation with the Board and with the approval of the Chief Executive, by notice in the Gazette, declare any place, building, site or structure, which the Authority considers to be of public interest by reason of its historical, archaeological or palaeontological significance, to be a monument, historical building or archaeological or palaeontological site or structure.” Members’ advice on whether Jamia Mosque, Lui Seng Chun and City Hall should be declared as monuments is, therefore, sought. The intended monument boundaries of the declaration are shown in **Annex G**.

### **NEXT STEP**

14. Subject to Members’ recommendation of the proposal to declare Jamia Mosque, Lui Seng Chun and City Hall as monuments, the Antiquities and Monuments Office will take the matter forward in accordance with the provisions of the Ordinance.

Antiquities and Monuments Office

March 2022

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