

**HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT IN RESPECT OF THE
REVITALISATION OF HOMI VILLA INTO
CENTRE OF NATIONAL HISTORY EDUCATION YOUYOU VILLA**

BACKGROUND

Under Batch VI of the Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme (“Revitalisation Scheme”), the Secretary for Development granted approval-in-principle in 2022 for the proposed conservation and adaptive re-use of Homi Villa (please refer to Figure 1 for the location plan) as Centre of National History Education Youyou Villa (“CNHE Youyou Villa”) submitted by National History Education (Hong Kong) Limited.

2. The site of the revitalisation project (“Site”) is located at 401 Castle Peak Road, Ting Kau, Tsuen Wan, New Territories. Homi Villa, which mainly comprises the Main Building (“MB”), the Extension (“EXT”) and an adjoining open garden with accessible ramps and staircases, and ancillary buildings (now serve as an electrical substation and a refuse collection point) located at the northwest of the Site beside the public carpark. The Site will be converted and revitalised into a learning centre that integrates Chinese culture and history studies with environmental studies, while the ancillary buildings will continue to serve its current use.

3. Homi Villa was a private residence of Mr. Jehangir Hormusjee Ruttonjee (“Mr. J.H. Ruttonjee”) (律敦治) (1880 – 1960) in the 1930s. It remained the property of the Ruttonjee family until it was acquired by the then Colonial Treasurer Incorporated (renamed The Financial Secretary Incorporated in 1985) of the Hong Kong Government in 1973 and used as government staff quarters. It was converted into the Airport Core Programme (“ACP”) Exhibition Centre since 1995. Homi Villa was accorded a Grade 3 historic building status in January 2010 by the Antiquities Advisory Board.

STATEMENT OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE**A. Historic / Historical Significance**

4. Homi Villa is one of the existent evidence of Parsee's contribution to the industrial, economic and social aspects of the early development of Hong Kong. It was built as the residence of Mr. J.H. Ruttonjee, a well-known Parsee merchant and philanthropist who was closely associated with Hong Kong's public affairs, including the establishment of the Ruttonjee Sanatorium in Wanchai (1949-1991) and development of public housing. He officially opened the Hong Kong Brewers and Distillers Limited in 1933 in Sham Tseng. Homi Villa is believed to have been built in the 1930s as Ruttonjee's residence to facilitate the monitoring of the business. Homi Villa is the only remaining evidence of Mr. J.H. Ruttonjee's pioneering development of Sham Tseng in the early 20th century and his contribution of the industrial development of the area.

5. The transfer of the ownership of Homi Villa to the Government in 1973 has allowed the Site to serve members of the government and the public. Due to its unique location and panoramic views, it was later converted into the ACP Exhibition Centre in the 1990s. The history of Homi Villa as a ACP Exhibition Centre reminds the public the accelerated infrastructure developments in Hong Kong in the 1990s.

B. Aesthetic / Architectural / Artistic Significance

6. The single-storey Homi Villa is a residence equipped with the architectural languages of a British colonial style bungalow adaptive to Hong Kong's hot and humid climate. The architectural features of both neo-classical style and Parsee vernacular architecture can be found in Homi Villa which is rarely found in Hong Kong. They reflect the social status, the wealth and the origin of the original owner, Mr. J. H. Ruttonjee. The Parsee features and the external finishes in white, black and red colours are J.H. Ruttonjee's tribute to Zoroastrianism, the religion of Parsees.

C. Social / Communal Significance

7. Homi Villa is of some local interest. It has earned the name “white house” due to its striking white appearance. Although the establishment of the ACP Exhibition Centre in 1996 has facilitated public’s visit, such use has existed for a relatively short period and the social / communal value recognized by the community is limited. Its social value mainly relies on its association with Mr. J.H. Ruttonjee who has great contributions in Sham Tseng and Hong Kong.

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT (“HIA”)

8. In accordance with the Development Bureau Technical Circular (Works) No. 1/2022, an HIA has been carried out with the objective of drawing up a Conservation Management Plan and assessing the heritage impact of the proposed project scope and design. Based on the Antiquities and Monuments Office (“AMO”)’s Conservation Guidelines contained in the Homi Villa’s Resource Kit provided under the Revitalisation Scheme, the HIA sets out the mitigation measures to avoid adverse impact on the historic building in the course of revitalisation works and outlines the future interpretation, maintenance and management strategies.

A. Project Proposal

9. The project will revitalise the Site into a learning centre that integrates Chinese culture and history studies with environmental studies, to deepen public’s understanding of the environment, history and culture and to allow visitors to learn about the history of Hong Kong through a variety of exhibitions, guided tours, workshops and activities.

10. The following provisions are required to be accommodated in the revitalised site:

- (a) In MB:

Annex A

- G/F: Two new display areas (“Augmented Reality exhibition area” and “station of Ruttonjee”, which both will be licensed places of public entertainment (“PPE”)), two new licensed restaurant areas, a nursery room, a reception for disabled and a switch room; and
- R/F: Leisure Area.

(b) In EXT:

- LG/F: A female toilet, a male toilet, one means of escape and one circulation staircase;
- G/F: A kitchen, a multi-purpose room (which will be a licensed PPE area), an office, an accessible toilet, a lifting platform, two means of escape; and
- R/F: Circulation space, two lifting platforms, two means of escape, location for new air-conditioning outdoor units and one new flushing water tank.

(c) In open spaces within the Site:

- LG/F: a sprinkler water tank, a fire service/ hose reel water tank and a pump room; and
- G/F: open garden, alfresco dining, areas for education, exhibition, and interpretation (which will be a licensed PPE area).

B. Conservation Principles

11. The Conservation Policies and Guidelines to conserve and interpret the Site are as follows:

(a) Setting & External Areas

- The setting of Homi Villa surrounded by open space on three sides should be respected and preserved. The spatial hierarchy and the massing of the heritage main building and the supporting extension should be recognized. No proposed works shall overwhelm the presence of the historic Homi Villa and open space.
- Any new works on the Site should not obstruct, but to encourage the reinstatement of the sightline for the appreciation of both Homi Villa and its original setting.

(b) Proposed New Uses

- The proposed new uses should be accommodated as far as possible within the existing layout and structure of the historic building. Any unnecessary interventions should be avoided and minimized.
- The allowable structural loading of MB flat roof should be considered when designing for the new use.

(c) Conservation of Built Fabric through Preservation, Repair and Restoration

- Preservation of historic fabrics on the facades should be prioritized.
- Every effort shall be made to preserve, restore and reveal as much as possible the elements of historic fabric of exceptional and high levels of significance based on available historical documents and records. Examples of character-defining elements (“CDEs”) with exceptional and high levels of significance are:

(i) External Grounds:

Annex A

- Setting / Surrounding grounds including the old access paths at the north side (the approach) and west side, old access gate pillars leading to the rear garden, and the remaining balustrades of old access path at north side;
- Vista to surroundings;
- Open space at the northeast, southeast and southwest of Homi Villa; and
- Balustrade with classical urn-shaped balusters and pillars.

(ii) Exterior:

- Massing, Form and White color of MB;
- External building façades of MB including the centre-pieces at the northeast elevation, and the southwest elevation, balustrades with classical urn-shaped balusters and pillars on the roof and verandahs, horizontal protruding roof eaves with dentil cornice, architrave and corbels, circular columns, external pillars, white stucco-work rendering with groove lines, all mouldings, window sills, original door and window openings;
- Opened verandahs and staircases to the verandahs of MB, including the vermilion terrazzo and black and white checkered mosaic tiles, vermilion hexagonal clay floor tiling, rendered skirtings and crown mouldings at ceilings;
- Flat roof of MB; and
- Original cast iron pipings and fittings.

(iii) Interior:

- Symmetrical spatial design of MB with original two larger rooms on central axis and two smaller rooms on each side;
- Original building structure and elements of MB;
- Ceiling mouldings; and
- Decorative timber panels at high levels of walls.

- Restoration is considered appropriate when solid evidence obtained through desktop research is available, for examples, the original windows that were filled up should be restored subsequent to detailed study of historical drawings and photos.
- All repair works should be carried out with the principle of repair rather than replacement.
- Intrusive later-additions should be removed to restore the hindered/disturbed CDEs as far as possible, or modified to minimize the impact to the CDEs, for example, the EXT with excessive height should be modified to respect the MB.

(d) Additions and Alterations (A&A)

- The approach of minimum intervention with maximum reversibility should be adopted for all A&A works.
- Any A&A works necessary to be carried out at the exterior, shall be constructed at location as far away from the main façade of MB as possible and at less significant area. Any new bulk introduced by the new works shall be so designed to respect and be compactible to but distinguishable from the historic building, for example, the new lifting platform for the disabled.
- Major A&A should be confined to the areas of later added structure.
- Enhancement to the existing protective barriers should be simple and practical to preserve the classic balustrades with urn-shaped balusters and minimize A&A and new works.
- New building services systems should not jeopardize the cultural significance of the Site. For example, the routing of proposed piping and conduits should utilize the existing wall openings and constructed at a level which will not obstruct the

appreciation of the heritage decorative timber panels at high level of walls.

(e) Interpretation

- Appropriate interpretation should be provided to enhance the public's understanding of Homi Villa and to enrich users' experience. Possible topics include:
 - the historical development and architectural evolution of Homi Villa, the interventions over time, the revitalisation process of the future adaptive reuse;
 - The contribution of Ruttonjee Family and Parsee community to the early development of Hong Kong; and
 - The industrial development of Sham Tseng, etc..
- The entire Homi Villa except the spaces housing the future office and kitchen shall be open for public's appreciation, with or without the guidance of a docent.
- Guided tours of Homi Villa and Sham Tseng could be organized.

(f) Documentation

- A documentation mechanism should be set up. All the studies, researches, investigation findings, mock up results should be kept in proper filing. Cartographic and photographic surveys to properly record the historic building shall be conducted before any works to the Homi Villa. Any future repair works during operation of the new use should be properly documented. All these records should be kept in appropriate means and media.

C. Key Design Proposal

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

(a) Overall site approach

- (i) The project intends to adaptively reuse the Site as CNHE Youyou Villa, a learning centre that integrates Chinese culture and history studies with environmental studies. The original layout of the historic MB will accommodate new display areas and restaurant areas; while EXT will house a new a multi-purpose room, a new kitchen and supporting facilities;
- (ii) the accessible ramp constructed for the ACP Exhibition Centre in 1990s will be demolished and replaced with new sloped plant area, while the old access path at the north side will be realigned to become a new accessible ramp with the entrance pillars to be restored at the original location, connecting the Castle Peak Road and the main entrance of MB;
- (iii) an underground new structure will be constructed next to the EXT to house the new 18000L FS/HR water tank and a new FS & Sprinkler pump room;
- (iv) A new metal opened escape staircase will be constructed at the west side of EXT; and
- (v) Open space will be enhanced with new landscaping, furniture and gates, with the later-added metal balustrades in front of the classic balustrades with urn-shaped balusters along site boundary removed.

(b) Conservation and A&A Works for transforming the Site into CNHE Youyou Villa:

- (i) Building exterior

Proposed works on historic facades of MB are basically repair and restoration. Major alteration works will only be carried out on the EXT:

- to restore the elevations of MB by repairing and repainting the facades, restoring the architectural features of MB including reconstruction of two statues above the balustrade of the fan-shaped staircase, and reinstating the original windows and doors that were filled up or modified in 1990s with steel windows, to reveal the historic appearance;
- to shrink the scale of the EXT constructed for the ACP Exhibition Centre in 1990s by lowering the height of the parapet wall of stair core to create a more harmonious appearance for the whole Site;
- to enhance the façade design of EXT by modifying the existing glass walls at the existing stair core, providing new sliding doors for the new multi-purpose room, and modifying the windows for office, kitchen at EXT etc., and also enhance the interfacing details between MB and EXT at the northwest elevation;
- to demolish the later-added steps and lifting platform on the G/F of the main façade of EXT. The latter does not serve all the floors. It will be replaced by two lifting platforms housed within and on the roof of EXT as a barrier free access to all floors of the building;
- to provide planters and heighten the parapet walls on the lower roof of EXT to create a visual screen for the mechanical plants and new flushing water tank behind;
- to remove the later-added metal balustrades in front of the classical balustrades with urn-shaped balusters on the roof; and

- to repair the existing flat roof with new paving incorporated with new lightning protection system.

(ii) Building interior

The layout of the interior of MB will be retained with interior features restored, including:

- to keep the verandahs as open verandahs;
- to reuse and renovate the existing layout to accommodate new display areas, restaurant areas, a new nursery room and a switch room with new floor finishes and false ceilings, and install new glass doors to separate the restaurants and displays areas;
- to restore the decorative timber panels at high level of walls of two original bedrooms and the original living room; and
- to restore and reconstruct two fire places and chimney breasts at their original locations

The interior of EXT will be altered, mainly as follows:

- to re-layout the interior of G/F to provide a multi-purpose room, an office, a kitchen and an accessible toilet;
- to demolish the existing staircase and construct two new escape staircases in metal within the existing stair core; and
- to relocate the female toilets and male toilets to the LG/F.

(iii) Key features preserved or restored for heritage interpretation

The following key features will be preserved or restored, and interpreted by guided tours:

Annex A

- Old access gate pillars at west side, restored main access gate pillars at north side, remaining original balustrades along old access path at north side, balustrades with classical urn-shaped balusters and pillars along site boundary;
 - External building facades of MB and opened verandahs and staircases to the verandahs including all preserved and restored features;
 - Symmetrical spatial design of MB, the original and restored decorative timber panels at high level of walls, ceiling mouldings and the restored fire places; and
 - Flat roof of MB and the vista to the surroundings.
- (iv) Enhancement works for complying with the statutory requirements of the Buildings Ordinance or other modern-day requirements apart from issues discussed above:
- to replace the existing railing at staircases to verandahs with new compatible design;
 - to apply for exemption from Buildings Authority for upgrading works or erection of new balustrades in front of the classical urn-shaped balustrades, with the below measures if inevitable necessary:
 - (i) reduce the level difference in front of the historic balustrades at G/F of MB verandahs by constructing a raised step below; and
 - (ii) erect new racks as planters in front of the historic balustrades along the site boundary and roof.
 - to demolish the existing concrete staircase at west end of the Site and replace with a new metal staircase;

- to demolish the existing metal staircase connecting the roofs of MB and EXT and replace with code compliant new metal staircases in two directions;
- to replace the existing air-conditioning system with a new one. The outdoor units will be placed on the lower roof of EXT and screened by the heightened parapet walls of EXT and planters;
- to introduce a new CLP 400A TPN service cutout with separate energy meter for new kitchen; and
- to re-arrange the building services such as electrical system, fire services system, air conditioning system, plumbing and drainage system, irrigation system etc..

D. Mitigation Measures for Revitalisation Works

13. 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 volume of the new slope should be designed carefully in order not to induce excessive loading to the structure, new balustrades behind the new slope will be subtle in design to match with the EXT and respects MB but also maintain distinguishability from the historic balustrade.
- (b) The conversion of the old access path to a new ramp will be designed with alignment made reference to the original alignment as far as technically practicable, new balustrades on the outer side will be made of glass to minimize visual impact, remaining original balustrades along the old access path will be preserved for interpretation.
- (c) The construction of new escape staircase will be located at the west side of the EXT which is far away from the main façade of MB, it will be made of lightweight metal with glass barriers to minimize the

building bulk and to maintain distinguishability from the MB and EXT. It will be an independent structure, with ultimate height not higher than the modified parapet walls of EXT. Precautionary measures during construction of new staircases and new underground structures will be carried out to ensure the structural stability of the MB and EXT will not be affected.

- (d) The modification of facades of EXT should be designed carefully by different materials and façade treatment so one can easily differentiate the later EXT from the MB. The external wall of the EXT will be set back from the main façade of MB to reveal the original hierarchy between the MB and ancillary buildings and to maintain the distinguishability. Keep the ultimate height of the future parapet walls of EXT except the stair core to be lower than the dental cornice of MB and the height of the stair core not higher than the ultimate height of MB.
- (e) The barrier free access from ground floor to roofs will be provided by two new lifting platforms to minimize the height of the new works. The new lifting platforms will be with height as low as possible. The portions above the roof of EXT will be constructed with glass enclosure/ barriers to allow the appreciation of the historic balustrades with classical urn-shaped balusters from different viewing angles and to maintain distinguishability.
- (f) The lightning prevention system installed at roof should be flushed with the future finished floor level.
- (g) The restored entrance gate pillars, statues at the fan-shaped staircase, windows and doors, fireplaces and decorative timber panels will be based on historic photos, historical architectural drawings, oral histories and site evidences, and will maintain distinguishability either by marking of the year of construction, different materials (e.g. fibre glass for statues), or with future interpretation.
- (h) The new external staircase connecting the roofs of EXT and MB will be constructed of metal with glass barriers to reduce the visual impact.

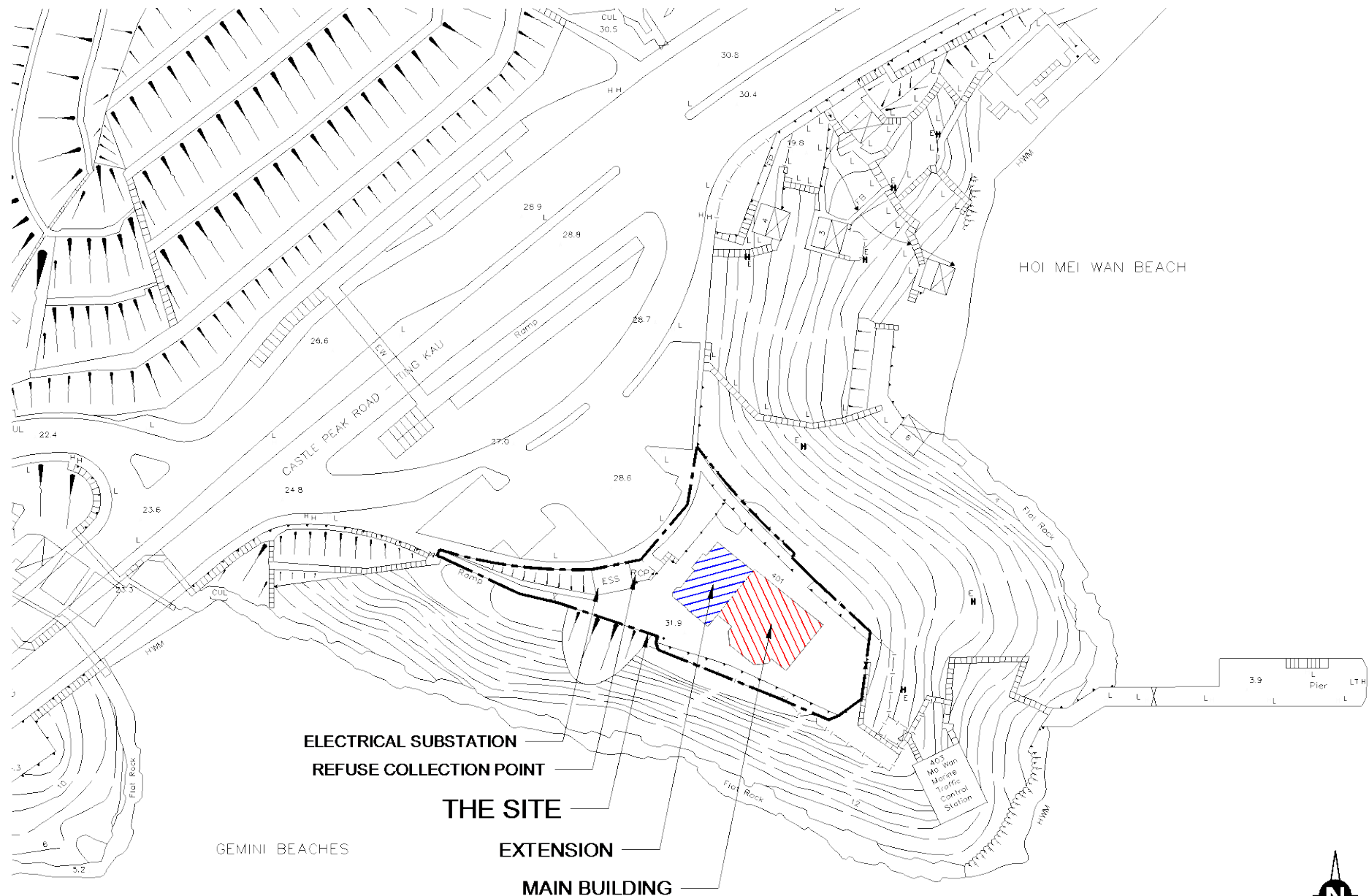
It will be structural independent from MB. It will connect to the MB at the location of the existing staircase to minimize the impact.

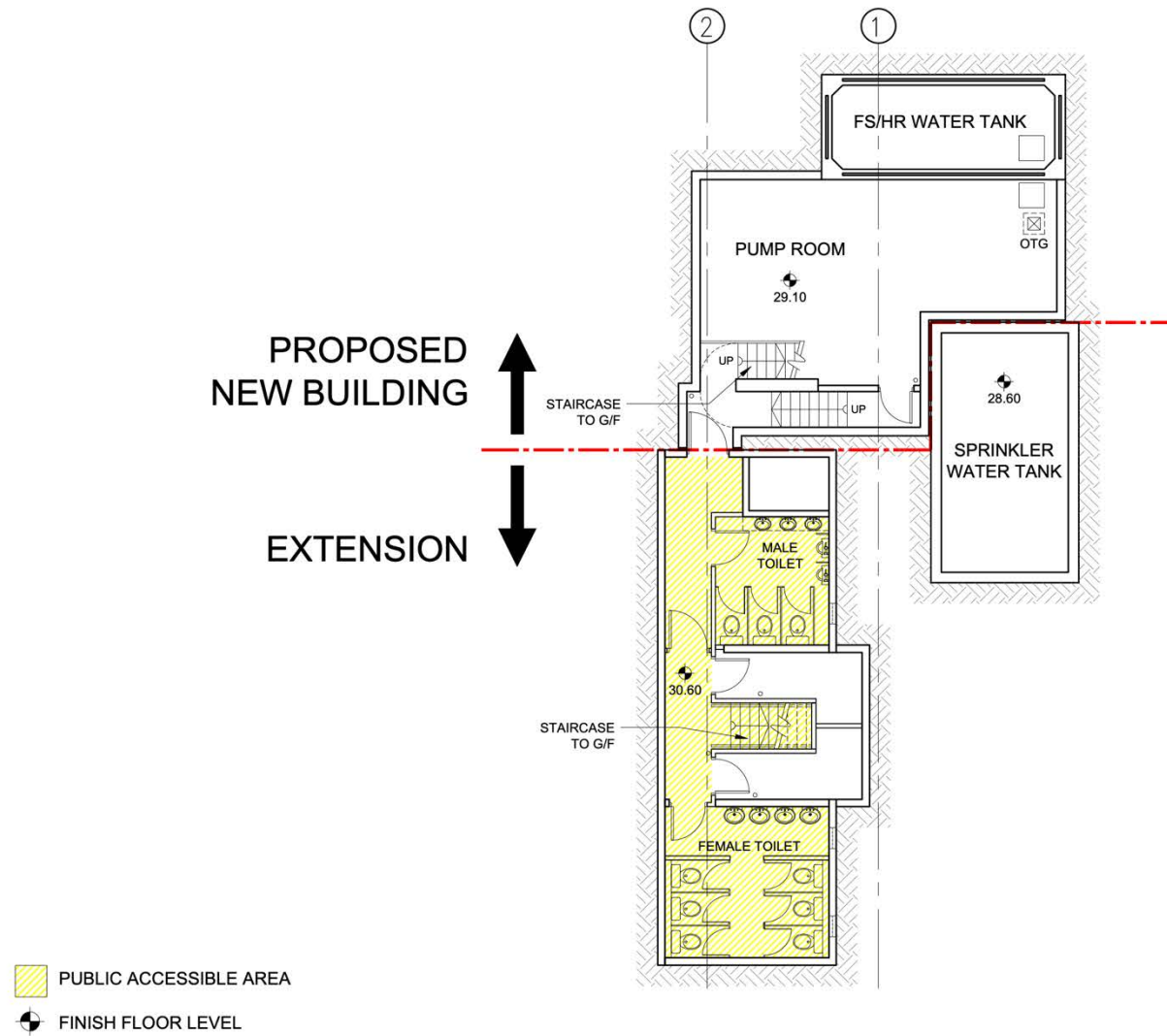
- (i) The new false ceilings at different spaces will be installed at appropriate level and design in a way in order to hide away the building services above while allowing the appreciation of historic ceiling mouldings and the decorative timber panels at high level of walls of MB.
- (j) The location of the building services system will be carefully designed in an integrated manner to minimize damage to the historic fabrics and enhance the aesthetics of the systems. Trunking, piping, ducting and sprinkler heads will be avoided at verandahs of MB.

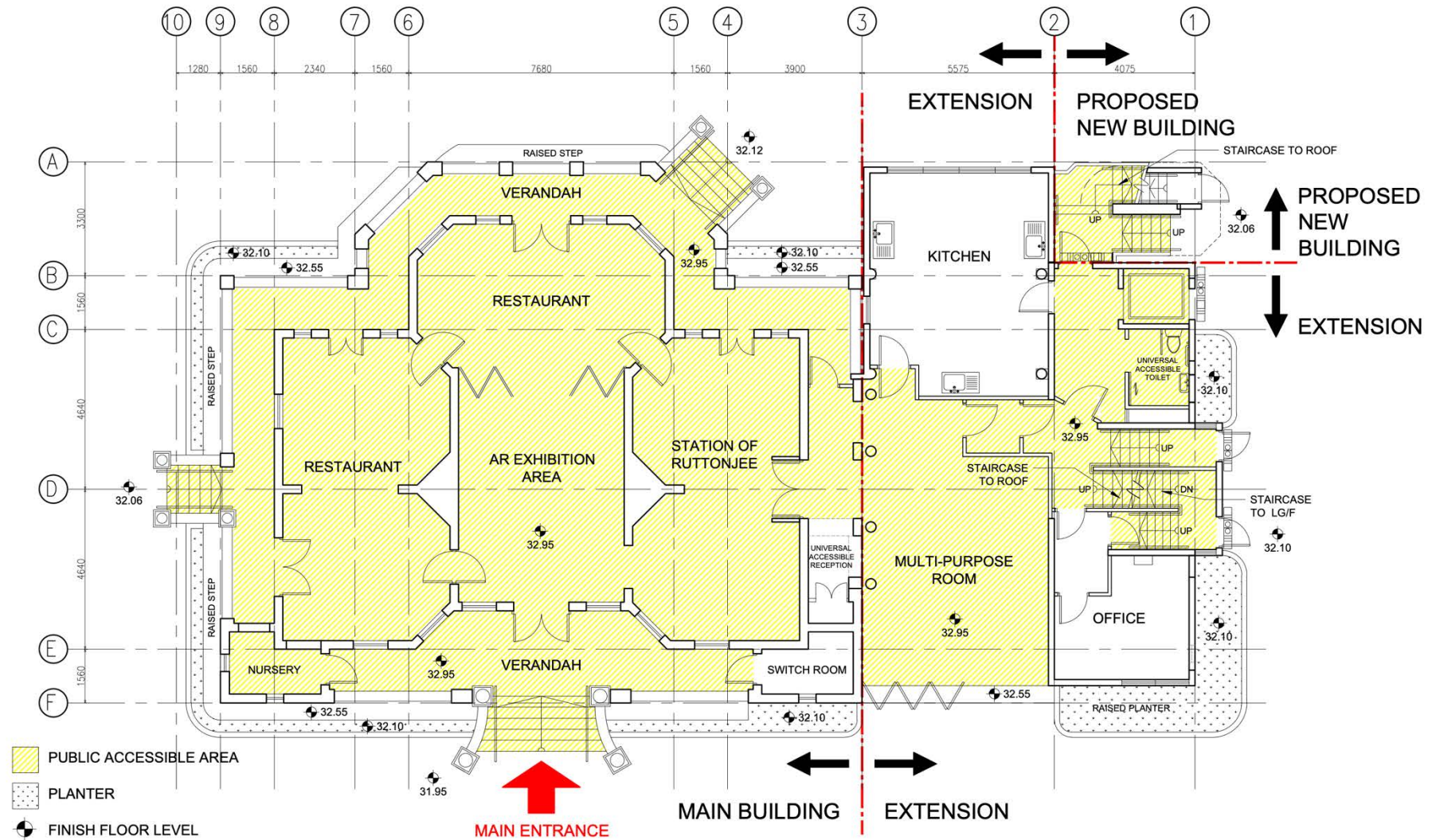
CONCLUSION

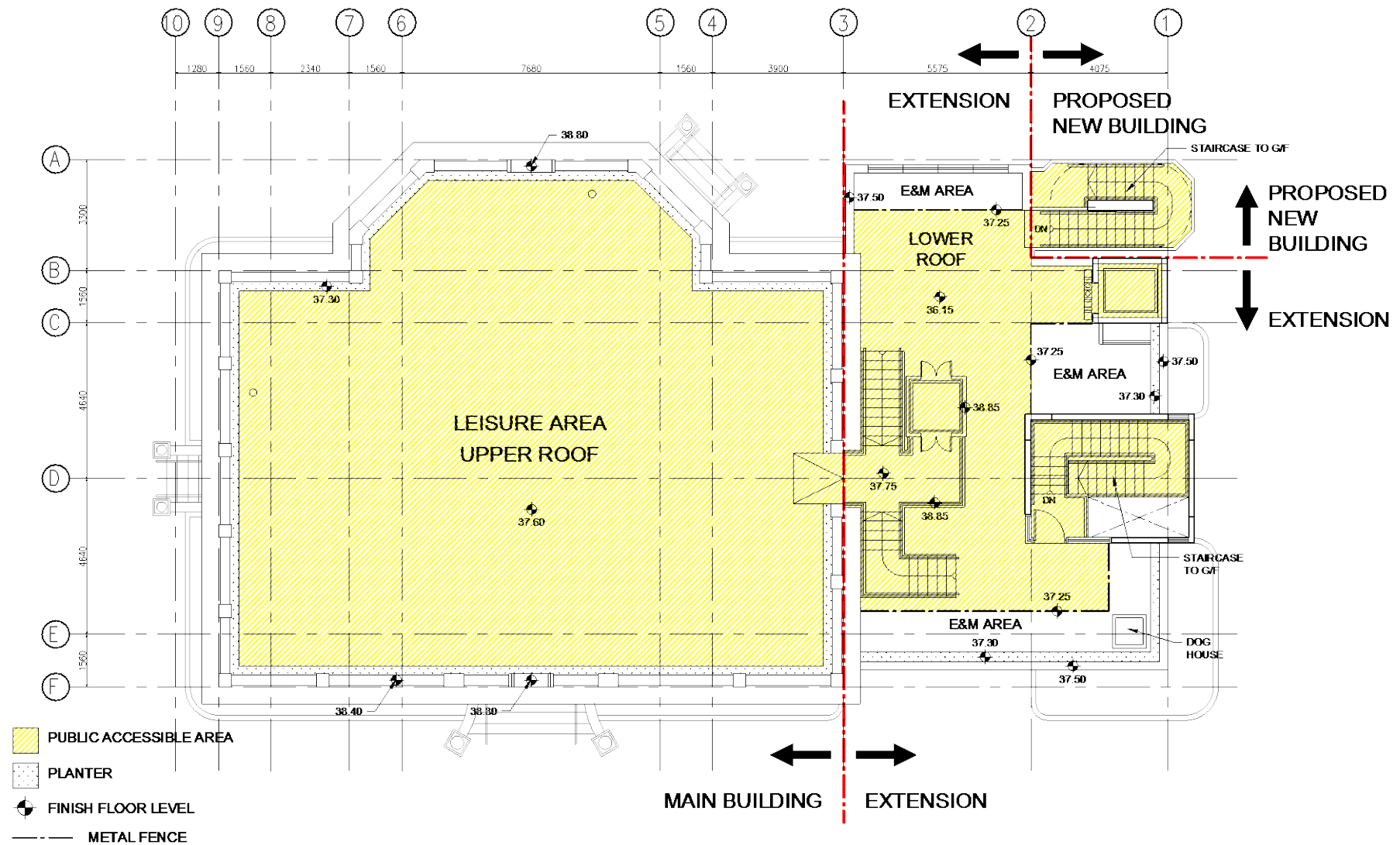
14. The HIA has concluded that the impact of the proposed revitalisation works at the Site is considered acceptable and manageable with the proposed mitigation measures. National History Education Centre (Youyou Villa) Limited will ensure that all works carried out for heritage conservation strictly comply with the requirements stipulated in the HIA as endorsed by the AMO.

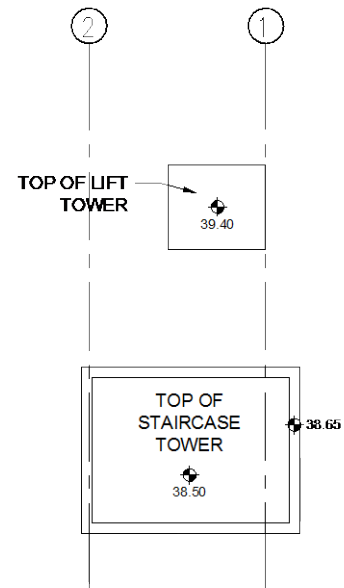
National History Education Centre (Youyou Villa) Limited
March 2024

**Figure 1: Location Plan (not to scale)**

**Figure 2: LG/F Plan (not to scale)**

**Figure 3: G/F Plan (not to scale)**

**Figure 4: R/F Plan (not to scale)**



 FINISH FLOOR LEVEL

Figure 5: Top R/F Plan (not to scale)

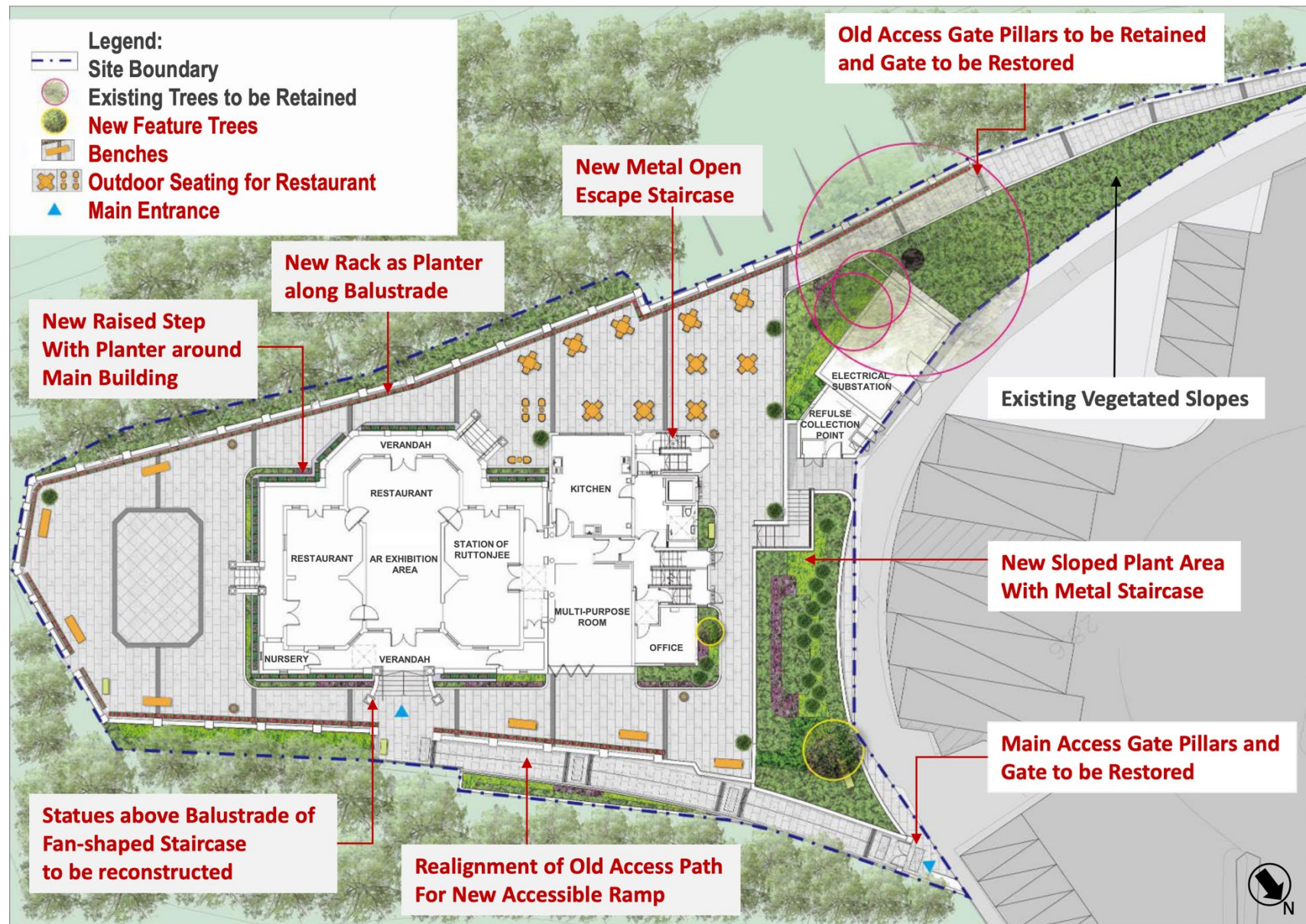


Figure 6: Landscape Plan (not to scale)



Figure 7: Northeast Elevation (not to scale)



Figure 8: Northwest Elevation (not to scale)

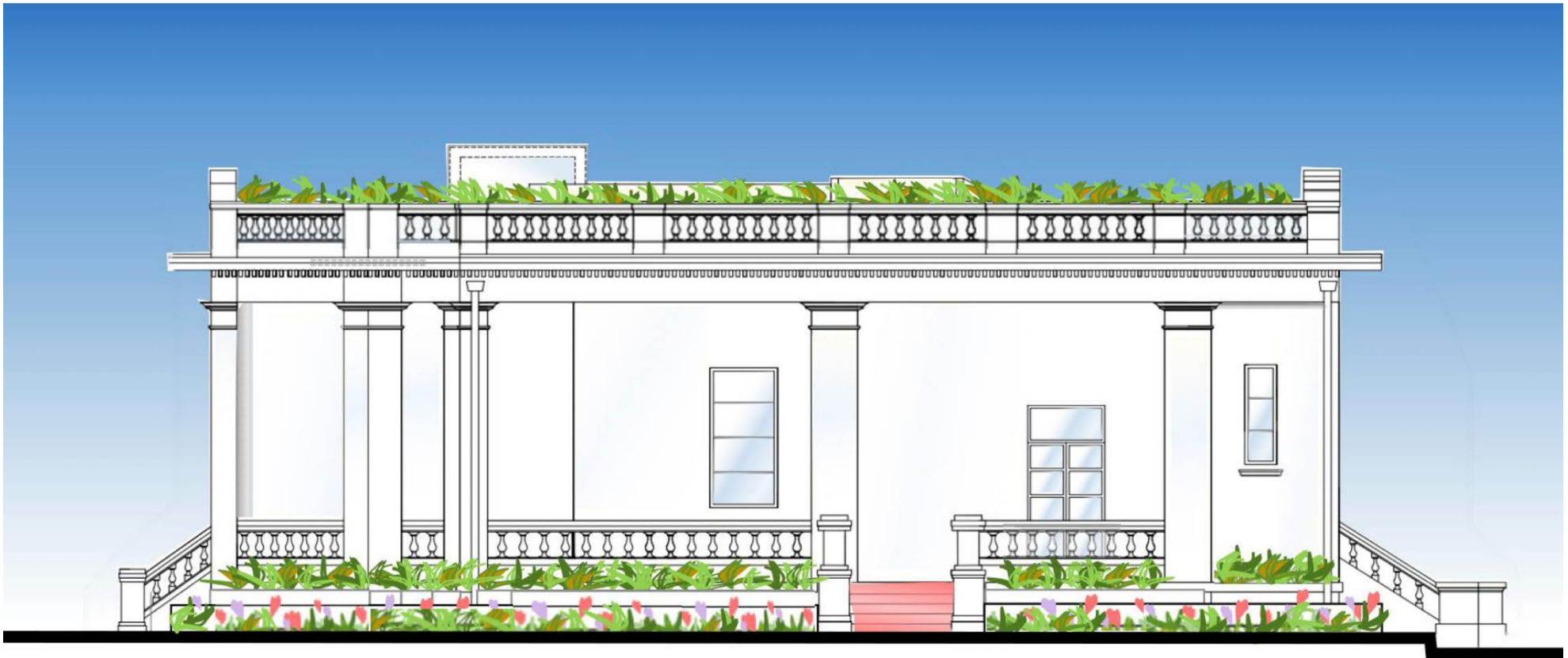


Figure 9: Southeast Elevation (not to scale)



Figure 10: Southwest Elevation (not to scale)



Figure 11: Artist Impression (Overview of Main Façade)



Figure 12: Artist Impression (View from Castle Peak Road)



Figure 13: Artist Impression (View from Open Space near Old Access Path at West Side)

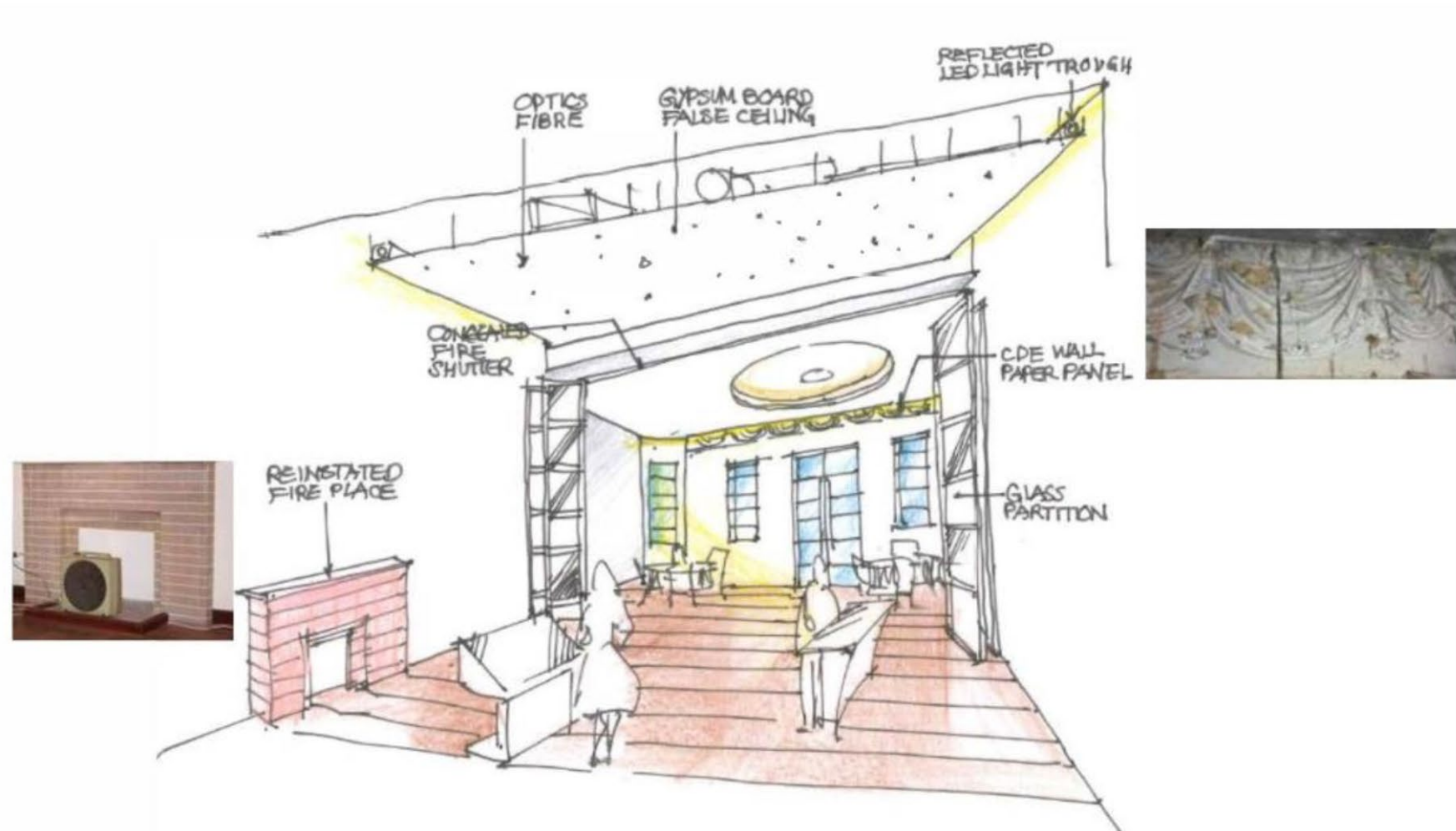


Figure 14: Artist Impression (View of Display Area on G/F Main Building)

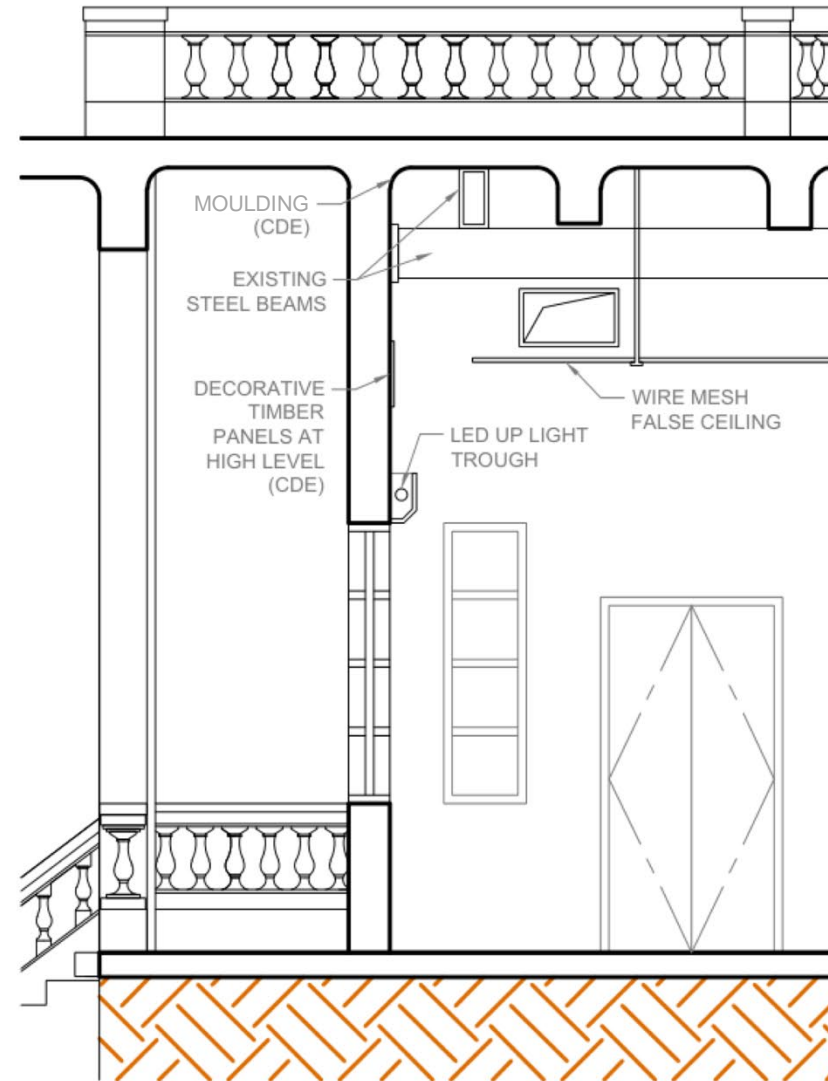


Figure 15: Artist Impression (View of Restaurant on G/F Main Building)