

**HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT IN RESPECT OF
THE REVITALISATION OF FORMER NORTH KOWLOON
MAGISTRACY INTO NK FUTURE**

BACKGROUND

The Development Bureau (“DEVB”) announced in December 2022 that the Society of Rehabilitation and Crime Prevention, Hong Kong (“SideBySide”) was selected to convert the Former North Kowloon Magistracy (“FNKM”) into NK Future, a universal judicial education centre to continue the judicial spirit and traditions of the Magistracy under Batch VI of the Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme (the “R-scheme”). N K Future Company Limited (“NKFCL”), a special-purpose company set up by SideBySide to implement the project, has subsequently commissioned a heritage conservation consultant to conduct the Heritage Impact Assessment on the revitalisation project.

2. The site of the revitalisation project (“Site”) is located at No. 292 Tai Po Road, Sham Shui Po, Kowloon (please refer to Figure 1 for the location plan). It comprises the main seven-storey magistracy building and two open forecourts at the north and south acting as vehicular run-in/run-out and parking areas. The existing two-storey temporary structure (previously serving as office space), temporary storage facilities, cooling towers for the air-conditioning system, and the fire services (“FS”) and sprinkler pump room with water tank are located at the south open forecourt.

3. The FNKM was built in 1960. It functioned as one of the busiest magistracies in Hong Kong and provided space on its upper floors for additional Government offices from its opening in 1960 until its closure in 2005. In 2009, under Batch I of the R-scheme, the magistracy was revitalised into the Savannah College of Art and Design (Hong Kong). The FNKM was accorded a Grade 2 historic building status in December 2009 by the Antiquities Advisory Board (“AAB”).

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

4. The FNKM holds significant historic value as it served as one of the key judicial courts handling criminal cases in the Kowloon district from 1960 to 2005. Built amidst rapid post-war population growth and after the Shek Kip Mei fire, it managed a high daily caseload and stood as a crucial witness to the evolution of the local justice system and the urban development of Sham Shui Po.

5. For over 40 years, the FNKM witnessed major legal and social milestones, such as taking the lead in implementing the Pilot Scheme on Chinese Trial Courts in 2000. Closed in 2005, the building remains an invaluable relic of Hong Kong's evolving legal framework and Sham Shui Po's vibrant urban transformation.

B. Architectural Significance

6. The building possesses high architectural value as a rare, prominent example of post-war civic architecture designed in the Stripped Classicism style by Palmer & Turner Architects. Its symmetrical façade is characterised by a double-canopied central projecting bay, simplified “giant order” columns, and tall narrow windows, emphasising verticality and institutional authority. Original exterior elements, including the grand double staircase, decorative metal balustrades, and historic bronze characters, showcase meticulous mid-20th-century craftsmanship.

7. Internally, the FNKM retains authentic period features such as travertine finishes, hardwood doors, and ornate staircase balustrades featuring fleur-de-lis motifs. An innovative Central Lightwell channels natural light into the core circulation areas.

8. Furthermore, the building perfectly exemplifies mid-20th-century legislative design through a highly specialised spatial layout. It features completely segregated circulation routes for the public, magistrates, and defendants, strategically designed to maintain judicial hierarchy and operational efficiency.

C. Social Significance

9. For nearly half a century, the FNKM served as the principal venue for adjudicating criminal cases from the densely populated districts of Kowloon and played a vital role in upholding a key social value. Processing a massive volume of cases involving local residents on a daily basis, it played an indispensable role in upholding community law and order. Consequently, the historic building and its operations became deeply embedded in the community of Sham Shui Po.

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT (“HIA”)

10. In accordance with the DEVB 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 impacts of the proposed project scope and design. Based on the Antiquities and Monuments Office’s Conservation Guidelines contained in the FNKM’s Resource Kit provided under the R-scheme, the HIA sets out mitigation measures to minimise adverse impacts on the historic building in the course of the revitalisation works and outlines the future interpretation, maintenance and management strategies.

A. Project Proposal

11. Under the Consolidated Project Proposal submitted by SideBySide, the FNKM will be revitalised into NK Future. The project includes additions and alterations to strengthen key functional areas and ensure they align with modern needs. The proposed core functions include heritage interpretation and judicial education, flexible multi-function and exhibition spaces, modern educational and training facilities, leisure, lifestyle, and food and beverage spaces, and improved accessibility and building services.

12. The following provisions are required to be accommodated in the revitalised Site:

- (a) Two Open Forecourts

- (i) Open space: Carparks equipped with Electric Vehicle (“EV”) charging facilities, leisure seating, pet-friendly facilities, sprinkler water tank and pump room;

(b) Main Building

- (i) LG/F: A lifting platform to G/F and associated lobbies, upgraded existing plant rooms;
- (ii) G/F: A lifting platform to LG/F and associated lobbies, Central Hall and Staircase, Reinstated Magistrates’ Staircase to 2/F, Defendants’ Staircase to 2/F, lifts to 5/F and associated lobbies, conserved and reinstated Detention Cells, Controlled Corridor, a shop, a café, a restaurant with a kitchen, a babycare room, toilets, a reception area, and other supporting spaces and plant rooms;
- (iii) 1/F: Central Hall and Staircase, Lecture Halls A, B and C, toilets, and other supporting spaces and plant rooms;
- (iv) 2/F: Central Hall and Staircase, conserved Court No. 1, Restored Court No. 2 (Virtual Court), Lecture Hall D, toilets, and other supporting spaces and plant rooms;
- (v) 3/F: Reinstated Magistrate’s Office, control rooms, a spectator space in Court No. 2 (upper part), dressing room, toilets, and other supporting spaces and plant rooms;
- (vi) 4/F: Function rooms, meeting rooms, ancillary offices, a pantry, void and platform connecting to 5/F, toilets, and other supporting spaces and plant rooms;

- (vii) 5/F: Lecture halls, void and platform connecting to 4/F, one staircase extension connecting to R/F, toilets, and other supporting spaces and plant rooms; and
- (viii) R/F: A staircase hood, a lift overrun and space for photovoltaic panels.

B. Conservation Principles

13. The Conservation Policies and Guidelines for reconstruction, restoration, conservation, and interpretation of the FNKM are as follows:

(a) New Use

- (i) The proposed new use should remain compatible with its historical function. Any future internal alterations or reconfigurations should be limited to operational necessities or statutory compliance and designed to be reversible with no adverse impact on the historic building's primary spaces of significance.
- (ii) The proposed new uses should be compatible with the structural loading capacity of the historic building.

(b) Built Fabric

- (i) The key architectural features and Character Defining Elements ("CDEs") of the FNKM should be subject to minimal intervention in order to preserve their character and heritage value. Retain them as far as possible to maintain the architectural merits of this historic building.
- (ii) Prioritise the principle of repair over replacement when carrying out conservation works. The identified CDEs with high level of significance should be retained *in-situ* and repaired to the greatest possible extent. Key features with high level of significance are:

- General Setting and Site Context
 - The historical setting on an elevated topography and with open forecourts at the North and South, and grand double staircase at pavement level.
- Exterior
 - West elevation facing Tai Po Road, including its symmetrical design, tall windows, glazed tiles, balconies, bronze entrance door, grand double staircase and balustrade, stone tablet, and the surviving horizontal and vertical bronze characters with the historic building's name in Chinese (“北九龍裁判法院”) and English (“NORTH KOWLOON MAGISTRACY”).
- Interior
 - General spatial organisation;
 - The Central Staircase from G/F to 2/F, Entrance Hall, and Central Halls, including its decorative metal balustrades and travertine wall finishes;
 - The Central Lightwell with glass block roof light at 2/F soffit;
 - Conserved Court No. 1 with original timber wall panelling and acoustic panels;
 - Conserved Detention Cell No. 6, the old Police Van Garage and their connecting Controlled Corridor; and
 - Defendants' and Magistrates' Staircases.

(c) Additions and Alterations (“A&A”)

- (i) The approaches of minimal intervention and maximum reversibility should be adopted for all A&A works.
- (ii) All new works should be physically and visually compatible with the original fabric, while still distinguishable.

- (iii) All reconstruction and restoration works should be evidence-based and should not diminish the authenticity of the heritage fabric.
- (iv) Any necessary A&A works at the exterior shall be constructed as far away from the façades of the historic building as possible and at a less significant area. Any new bulk introduced by the new works shall be so designed to respect and be compatible to but distinguishable from the historic building.
- (v) New building service systems should not jeopardise the cultural significance of the building.

(d) Setting and Landscape

- (i) Preserve the setting of open forecourts on both sides of the FNKM. Any future modification or improvement works should respect the existing landscape and maintain the spatial relationship and openness of the forecourts, and be visually harmonious with the historic building.

(e) Interpretation

- (i) Provide interpretation utilising historically significant areas including conserved court rooms, Detention Cells, and the Public Hall, alongside with interpretation of oral history on previous uses of the buildings and guided tours. The interpretation strategy will adopt a “whole-building approach” to establish a “Living Judicial Museum”. Integration of artefacts and oral history throughout the tour experience over several floors, featuring authentic physical artefacts, quick response (“QR”) codes, and documentary films derived from oral histories of former court staff, are designed to create a deeply humanised, interactive museum experience. The proposed contents for key spaces are as follows:

- G/F
 - Entrance Hall: Introductory exhibits detailing the Magistracy's history, architectural significance, and the NK Future's vision.
 - Controlled Corridor and Detention Cells: A Guided Tour area utilising the authentically restored cells and multimedia displays to explain legal procedures and detainee experiences.
- 1/F
 - Central Hall: General displays providing further background on the Magistracy and the ongoing NK Future initiatives.
- 2/F
 - Central Hall: Exhibition space dedicated to the broader evolution of Hong Kong's judicial history.
 - Conserved Court No. 1: An authentically preserved 1960s courtroom used for "immersive theatre", where visitors can role-play in re-enactments of historical court cases.
 - Court No. 2: A reinstated space utilising augmented reality/virtual reality ("AR/VR") technologies and smartphones to host mock trials and recreate historical courtroom scenes.
- 3/F
 - Reinstated Magistrate's Office: Reconstructed using oral history, this office features displays on law history, the legal system, and magistrates' daily lives.
 - Corridor Galleries: Modified viewing balconies that provide visitors with an elevated perspective to observe the courtrooms spaces below.

(f) Documentation

- (i) A documentation mechanism should be set up. Cartographic and photographic surveys to properly record the historic building will be conducted before commencement of works. All studies, researches, investigation findings, condition survey, and mock-up results shall be kept in proper filing. The revitalisation process of the FNKM shall be documented for record and interpretation purposes. Any future repair works during operation of the new use should be properly documented. All such records should be kept in appropriate means and media.

(g) Management and Maintenance

- (i) Establish a detailed management and maintenance manual to ensure the proper use and preservation of the FNKM during operation. This manual should guarantee that the FNKM will be kept in good condition and in compliance with conservation policies and best practices.

C. Key Design Proposal

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

(a) Overall Site Approach

- (i) The project intends to renovate and adaptively re-use the historic building to serve multiple community and educational functions. The spaces will be transformed into a multifaceted platform accommodating a heritage interpretation area, a universal judicial education centre, experiential workshops, training and practice rooms, breakout areas, studios for artists-in-residence, and a fine dining restaurant;
- (ii) A new lifting platform will be constructed with access at the West elevation from the open spaces, connecting Tai Po Road and the G/F;

(iii) Repave the open space in front of the building and integrate a system of tactiles for barrier free access (“BFA”). The north and south open forecourts will be enhanced with landscape design integrating EV charging facilities and new parking line markings in the carpark, promoting eco-friendly transportation while maintaining their spatial relationship and openness; and

(iv) A new sprinkler water tank will be installed adjacent to the existing FS and sprinkler pump room, after removing the existing temporary storage.

(b) Conservation and A&A Works for transforming the Site into NK Future:

(i) Building exterior

Proposed works on façades of the historic building are basically repair and restoration. No major works will be carried out except:

- to accommodate the necessary upgrading of building services, selected existing windows on the rear elevation will be modified into louvres within their original openings. Concurrently, for any unused, later-added louvres, the original 1960s metal casement window configuration will be reinstated to reveal the historic appearance, and new façade lighting for the building will be installed;
- to preserve the elevations of the building by cleaning the façades and repairing any defective painted walls on a like-for-like basis and to retain, clean and preserve the stone tablet and its surviving bronze characters to reveal the building’s historic appearance;
- to repair historic metalwork, including steel windows, grilles, metal bars, gates, French doors, and balustrades, incorporating an anti-corrosion coating that matches the existing finishes;

- to clean the main entrance bronze doors, applying protective waxing for protection of their historic appearance and to repair any defective portions of the exposed wooden doors, applying coating to match the existing appearance; and
- to clean and locally repair the existing granite elements to preserve their authentic texture and structural integrity and to repair any decorative glazed tiles on the façades on a like-for-like basis to reveal their historic appearance.

(ii) Building interior

The following interior configuration of the FNKM will be retained or reinstated, and the interior features will be restored based on historical records:

- to retain Conserved Court No.1 as-is;
- to reinstate Detention Cells, and retain and conserve the Defendants' Staircase (G/F – 2/F), Police Van Garage and Controlled Corridor;
- to reinstate the original 1960s symmetrical spatial layout of the G/F Entrance Hall, utilising salvaged cladding and original door components, while installing a modern light-emitting diode (“LED”) screen into part of the reinstated area;
- to restore the magistrates' original 1960s circulation route by reinstating the demolished portion of the Magistrates' Staircase (G/F – 2/F), replace the existing modern balustrades with a design closer to the original balustrades and reinstate one Magistrate's Office by reconfiguring the internal partition walls;

- to restore and renovate Court No. 2 into a contemporary court layout, modify existing walls and create a balcony to allow observation from 3/F. The original spatial divisions and high-ceiling qualities of Courts No. 3 and No. 4 will be reinstated and transformed into Lecture Hall D, with existing walls modified to glass panels and acoustic operable walls to allow flexible use of the space. New control rooms to the three courts will be added on 3/F;
- to reuse and renovate the existing layout of the heavily altered areas on various floors to accommodate a café, a fine dining restaurant with a kitchen, a babycare room, toilets, a reception area, lecture halls with acoustic operable wall, exhibition spaces with opened-up solid corridor walls, training rooms, practice rooms, ancillary offices, other supporting spaces, and plant rooms;
- to install a new service lift near the east side of the building without altering the existing structural foundation footings, provide a compact lift overrun enclosure to preserve the key sightlines from the ground level and create a new 2/F wall opening for lift access with minimal removal of travertine; and
- to enhance the spatial and visual connectivity between 4/F and 5/F by creating a new void, steps and platform strategically positioned in response to the symmetry of the original design, thereby providing a new seating area facing the Central Lightwell.

(iii) Key features preserved or restored for heritage interpretation

The following key features will be preserved or restored for interpretation through guided tours and digital/printed displays, including:

- The CDEs across all elevations, as well as the north and south open forecourts.

- General Architecture & Circulation Elements:
 - The Central Staircase (G/F to 2/F), Entrance Hall, and Central Halls with original decorative metal balustrades featuring fleur-de-lis motifs, travertine wall finishes, and ceiling mouldings; and
 - The original Central Lightwell with its glass block roof light at the 2/F soffit, maintaining its visual impact and natural illumination.
 - Court-Related Elements:
 - Conserved Court No. 1, including the original timber wall panelling, furniture, timber flooring, and acoustic panels; and
 - The original solid wooden panel doors and signages with bronze characters leading to the courtrooms.
 - Magistrate-Related Elements:
 - The reinstated Magistrate's Office; and
 - The Magistrates' Staircase with original finishes and reinstated balustrade.
 - Defendant-Related Elements:
 - The Detention Cells, Police Van Garage, and Controlled Corridor; and
 - The Defendants' Staircase with original finishes.
- (iv) Enhancement works for complying with the statutory requirements of the Buildings Ordinance or other modern-day requirements apart from the issues discussed above:
- to install a new lifting platform access from Tai Po Road and a system of tactiles to fulfil BFA requirements;

- to introduce new fire shutters and fire-rated doors at various locations to fulfil fire compartmentation requirements, install a smoke barrier surrounding the Central Staircase opening on the 1/F with solid furring that matches existing finishes, provide fire-rated glazing between the Central Staircase atrium on the 2/F and the Central Lightwell on the 3/F, install fire-rated boards within the exhaust fan housings for fire safety requirements, and demolish the later-added skylight on the R/F;
- to seek the Building Authority's exemption on the use of the grand double staircase under a management approach similar to that granted previously;
- to extend the existing staircase ST-3 from 5/F to the roof and to modify the bottom portion at 1/F to accommodate the space required for the new layout; and
- to repair and reuse the existing fall arrest system on the canopy above the main entrance.

D. Mitigation Measures for Revitalisation Works

15. 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) New repaving in the Open Space and a system of tactiles for BFA will be subtle in design, ensuring visual compatibility while maintaining distinguishability from the historic 1960s exterior setting and existing floorings. The construction of a new lifting platform and its access will utilise existing openings to retain the west façade with the G/F slab modified with adequate precautionary measures to ensure that the structural stability of adjacent structures will not be affected.

- (b) The new façade lightings should be carefully designed with discreet and compact new conduit routings, utilising existing openings and installing all fixtures, brackets and trunking using fully reversible methods.
- (c) The modification of the walls for Court No. 2 and for transforming Courts No. 3 and No. 4 into Lecture Hall D should be carefully designed using new, reversible wall panels without compromising structural stability. The design should respect and reveal key architectural features such as double-storey space, ceiling mouldings, and steel windows, and should retain the decorative mouldings along top edges of the walls with interpretation materials to introduce the original design. The spatial separation of Courts No.3 and No.4 shall be maintained via operable walls and glass partitions. New equipment will be mounted on new trusses to minimise visual impact to the original decorative mouldings on ceilings for interpretation.
- (d) The construction of the new service lift will be located in relatively low-significance area near the east side of the building to minimise visual impact, utilising minimal structural reinforcements. The height of the lift overrun will be kept as low as possible. The extent of the new wall opening for lift access in the travertine panels, which was likely modified previously, should be kept minimal, with adjacent intact travertine panels carefully protected and dismantled for future reinstatement.
- (e) The construction of the new void, steps and platform should be carefully designed to keep necessary structural reinforcements compact and discreet, while utilising materials that are visually compatible yet distinguishable from adjacent finishes, and the condition of the existing slabs should be fully recorded prior to the commencement of work.
- (f) The finishes of the furring acting as a new smoke barrier will match with the existing elements in a reversible manner. The new fire barriers in the Central Lightwell and the exhaust fan housings will incorporate only necessary

structural elements to remain visually compact. The existing glass block slab will not be affected by implementing adequate precautionary measures.

- (g) The new staircase extension to the roof should be carefully designed with a compact, lightweight shed roof featuring an understated, muted colour palette to preserve the key sightlines from the ground level.
- (h) The new false ceilings at different spaces will be installed at appropriate levels and designed to conceal the building services above, while allowing for the appreciation of the historic decorative mouldings at the high level.
- (i) The upgrade of building services will be carefully designed in a holistic manner to minimise damage to the historic fabrics by reusing existing openings, routing exposed wiring in minimally-sized trunkings, and ensuring that no new openings will be made on the external façades.

CONCLUSION

16. The HIA has concluded that the impact of the proposed revitalisation works at the FNKM is considered acceptable and manageable with the proposed mitigation measures. NKFCL will ensure that all works carried out for heritage conservation strictly comply with the requirements stipulated in the HIA as endorsed by the AAB.

N K Future Company Limited

September 2026

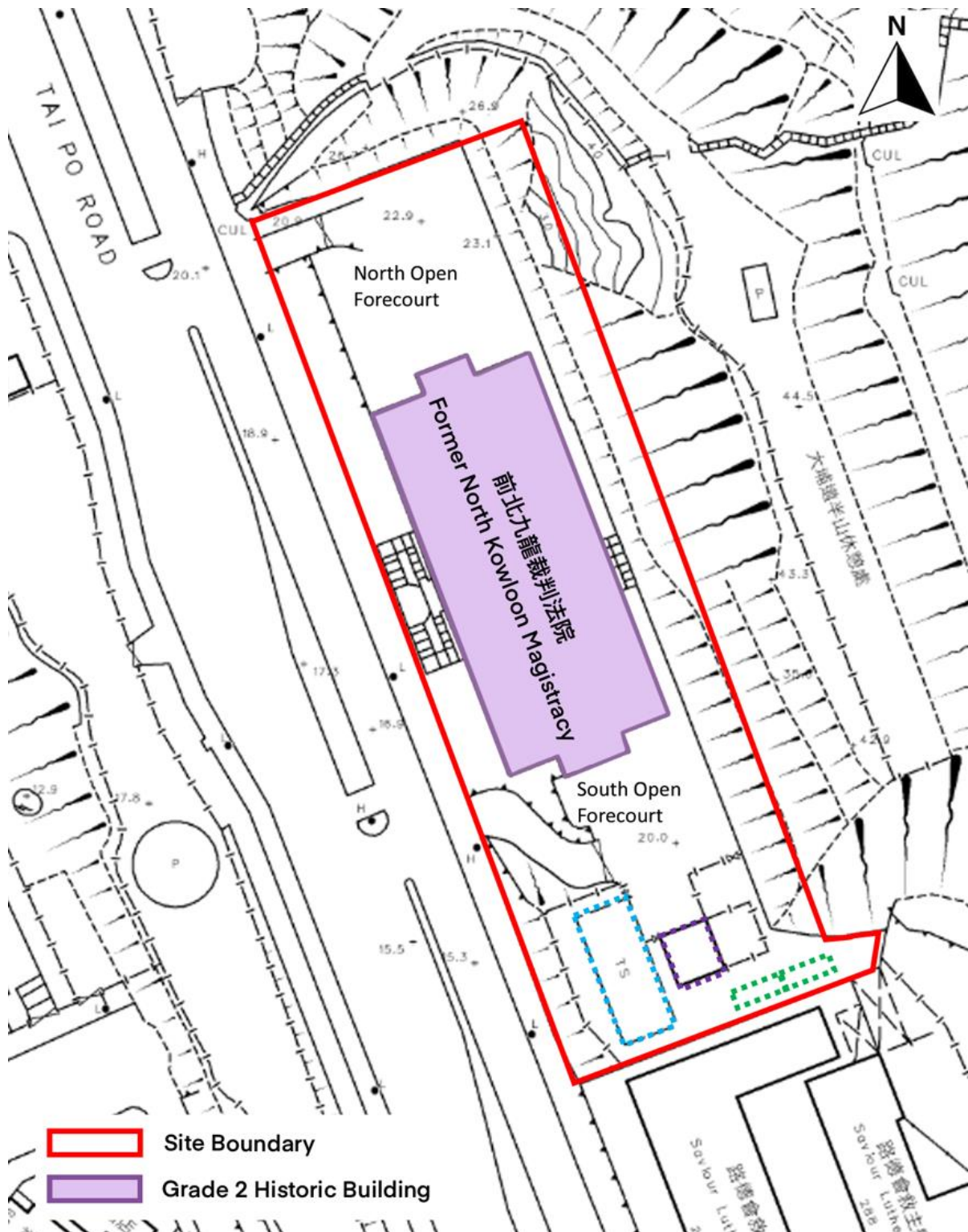


Figure 1. Site Plan of the project

Cyan dotted line: Temporary Structure (Two-storey temporary building)

Purple dotted line: FS & Sprinkler Pump Room & Tank

Green dotted line: Temporary Storage (containers)



Figure 2. General aerial view of the FNKM (front)



Figure 3. General aerial view of the FNKM (rear)



Figure 4. West façade of the FNKM



Figure 5. Central Staircase of the FNKM (G/F)



Figure 6. Conserved Court No.1 (2/F)

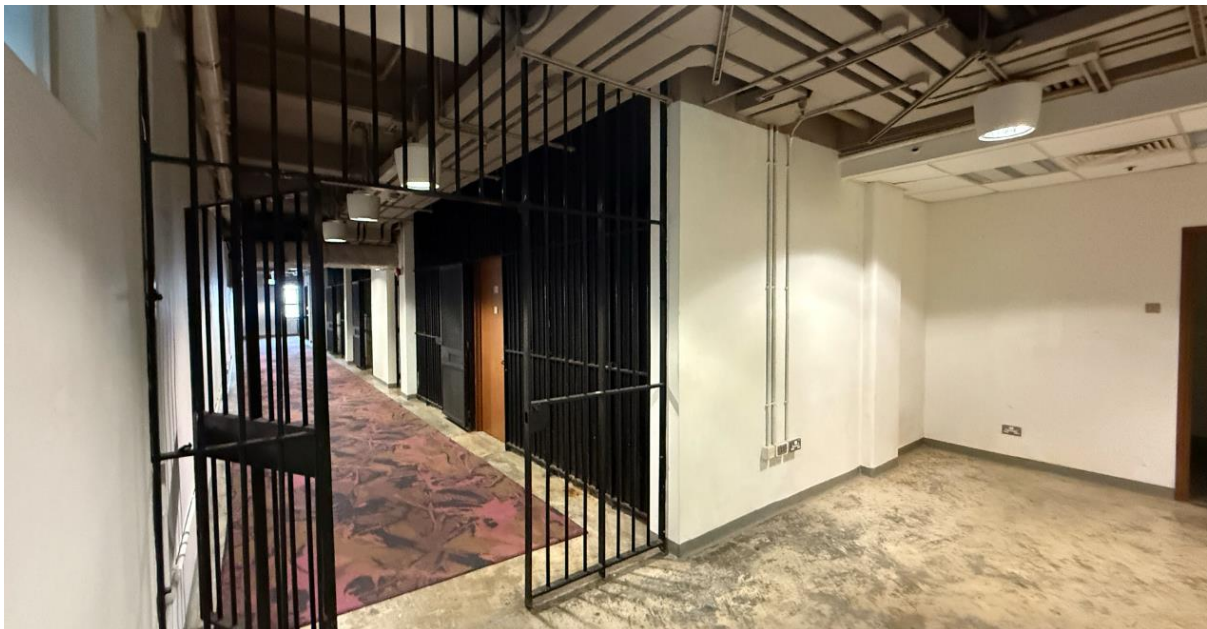
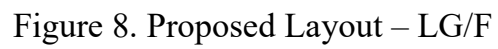


Figure 7. Controlled Corridor and Detention Cells



TAI PO ROAD

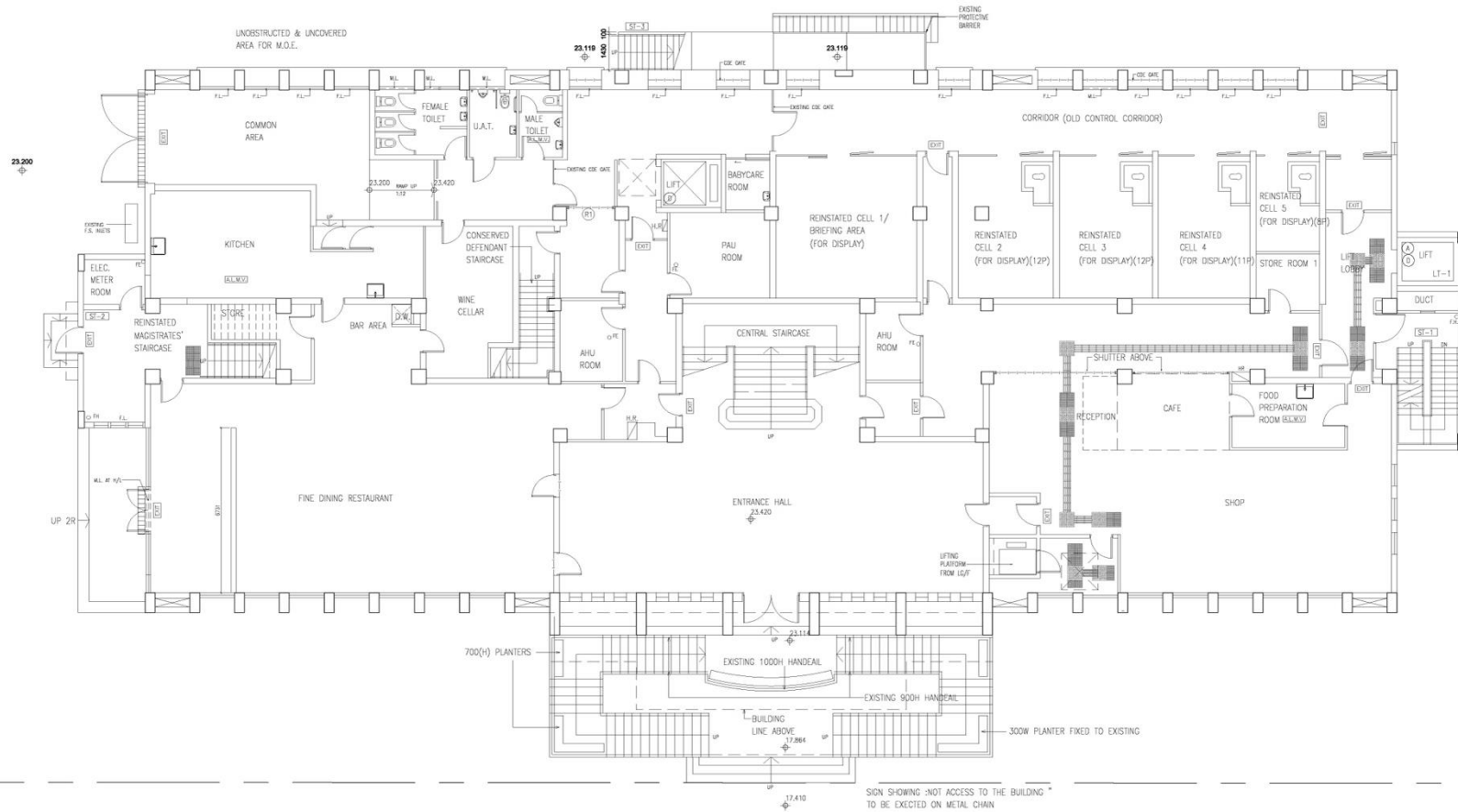
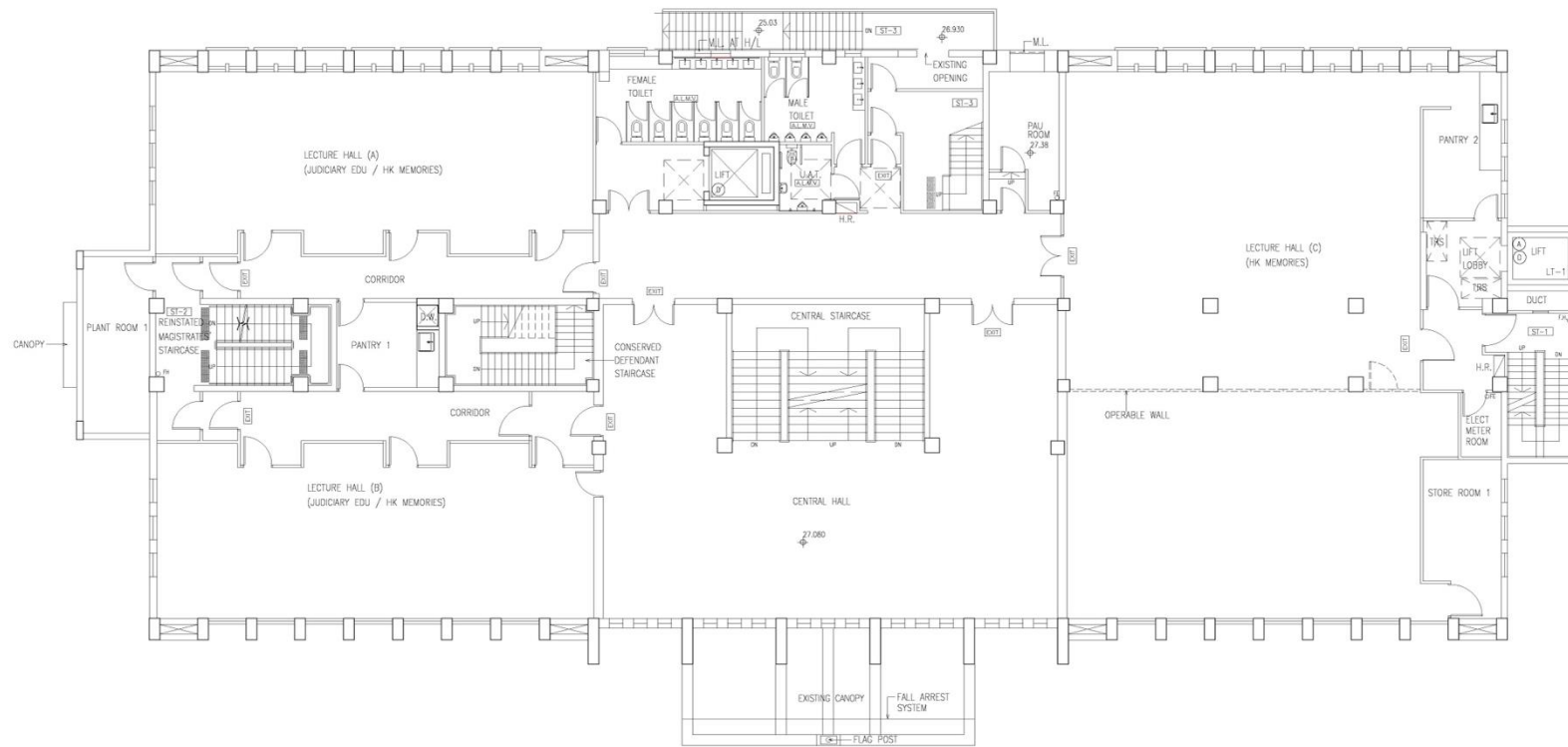


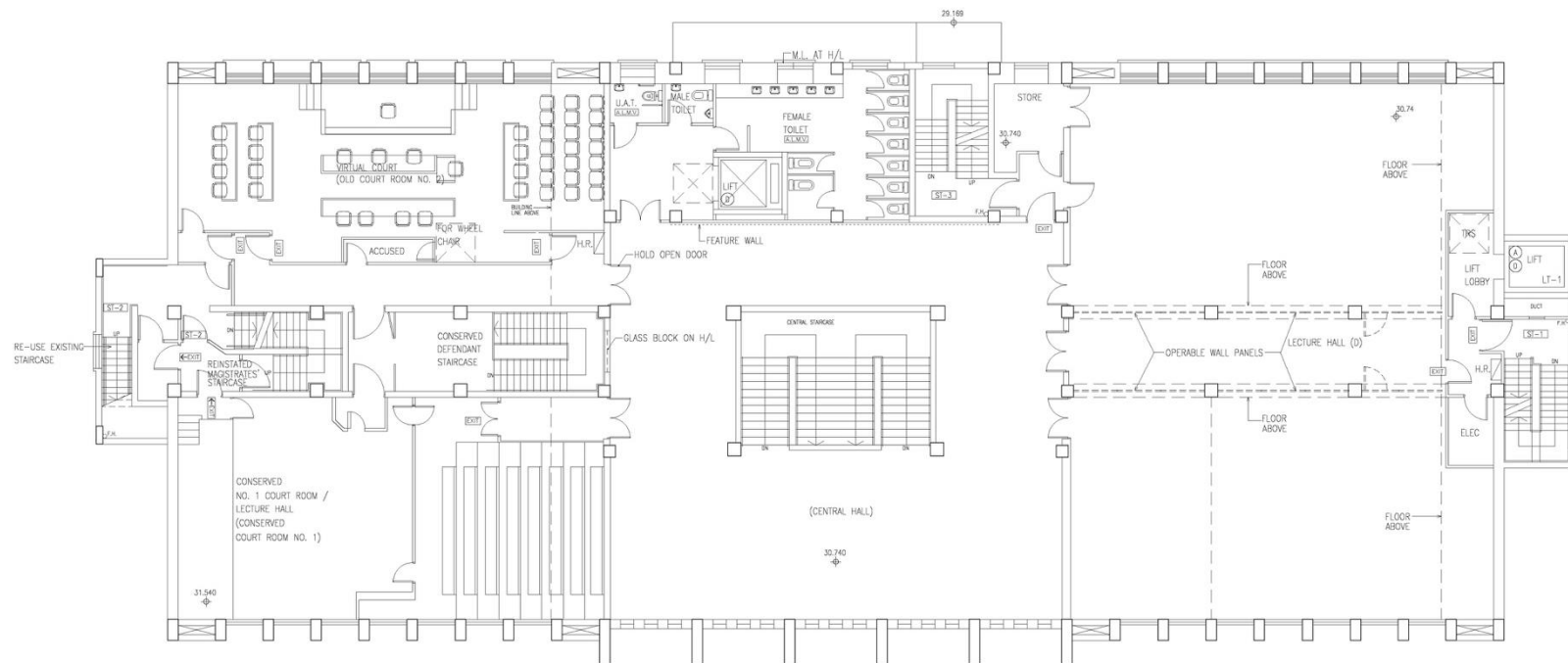
Figure 9. Proposed Layout – G/F

GROUND FLOOR PLAN



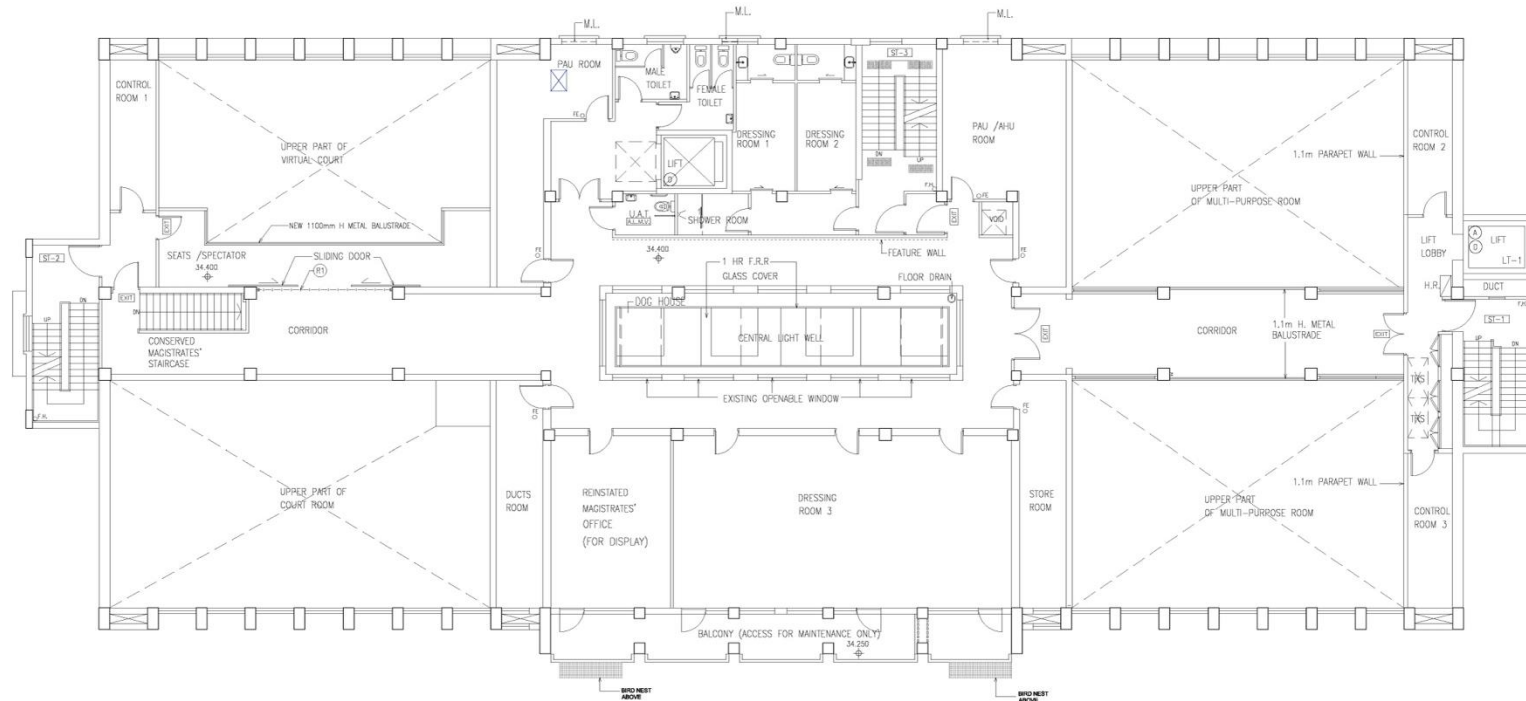
FIRST FLOOR PLAN

Figure 10. Proposed Layout – 1/F



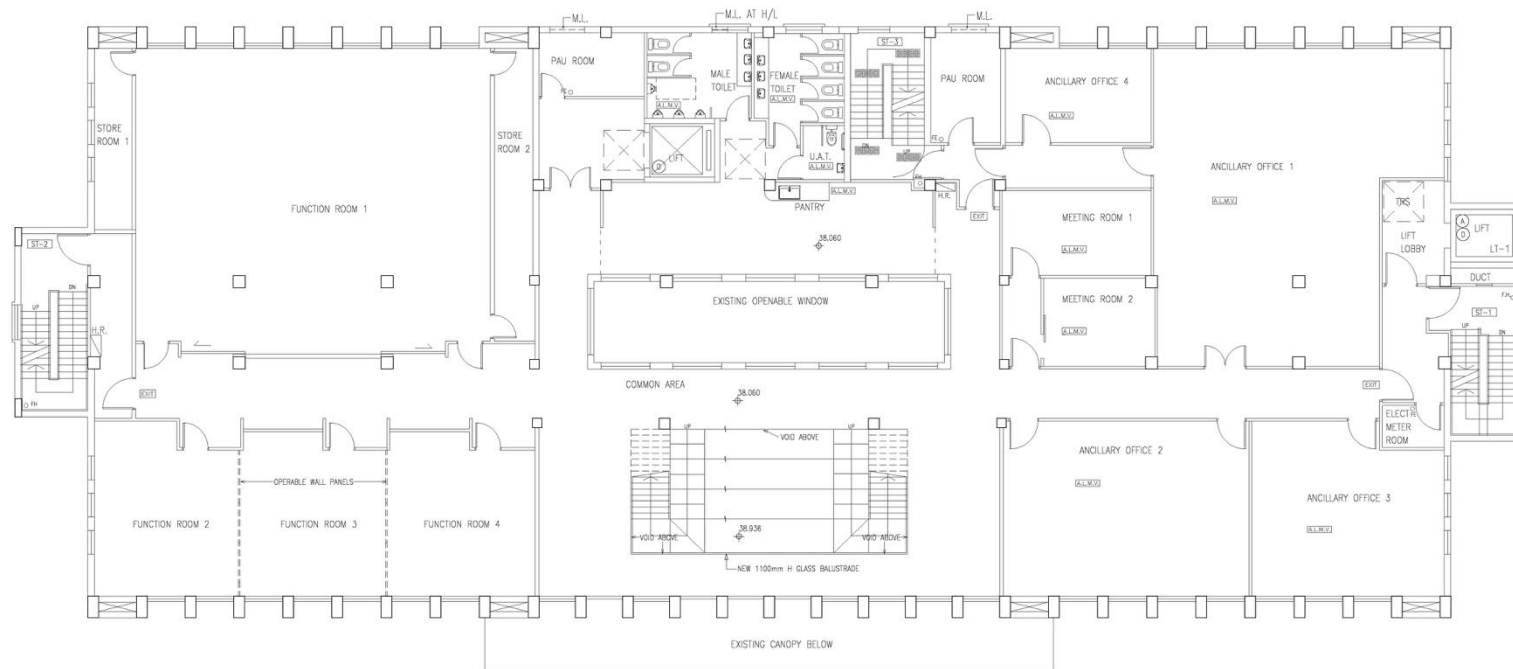
SECOND FLOOR PLAN

Figure 11. Proposed Layout – 2/F



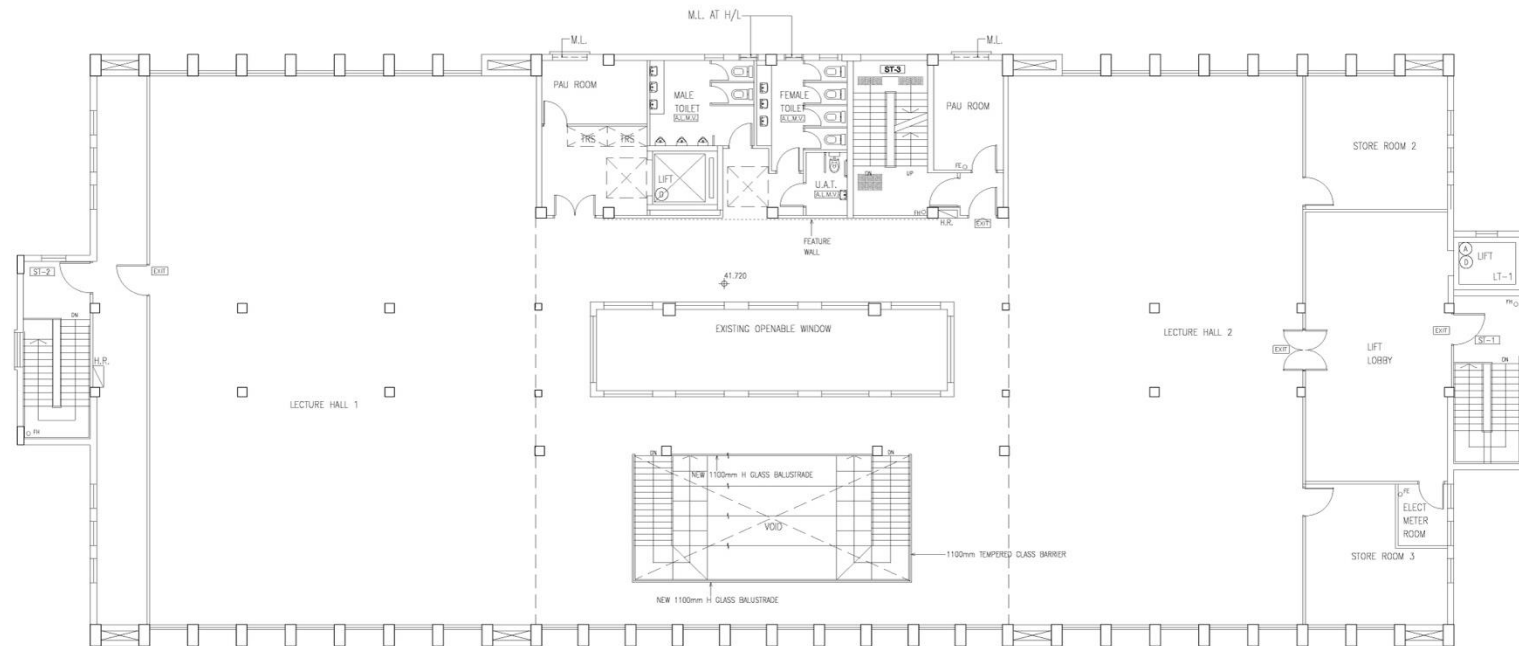
THIRD FLOOR PLAN

Figure 12. Proposed Layout – 3/F



FOURTH FLOOR PLAN

Figure 13. Proposed Layout – 4/F



FIFTH FLOOR PLAN

Figure 14. Proposed Layout – 5/F

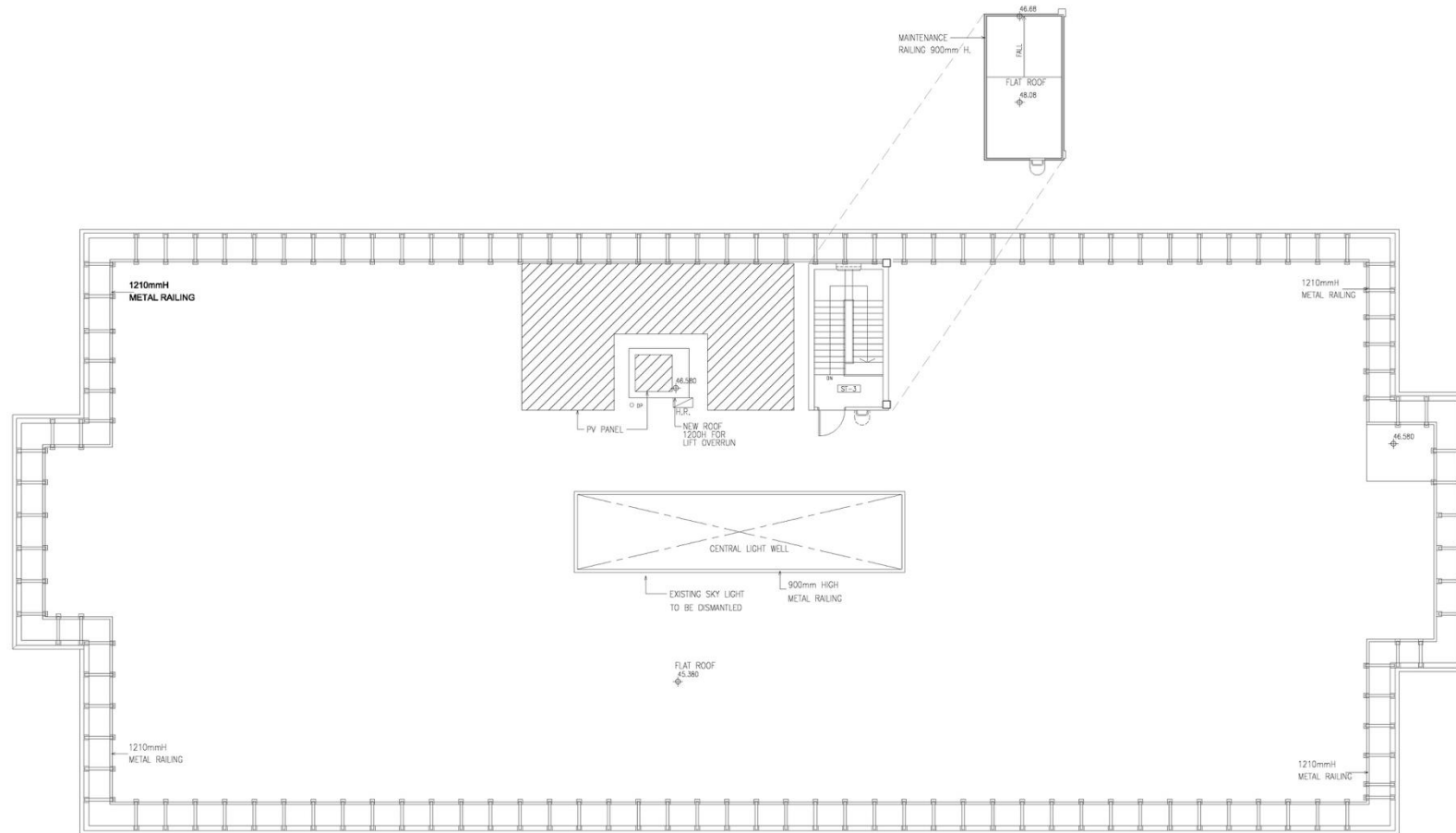
ROOF PLAN

Figure 15. Proposed Layout – Roof



Figure 16. Artist impression of the Controlled Corridor at G/F



Figure 17. Artist impression of the Section from the Ground Floor to the Second Floor



Figure 18. Artist impression of the Central Hall (2/F)

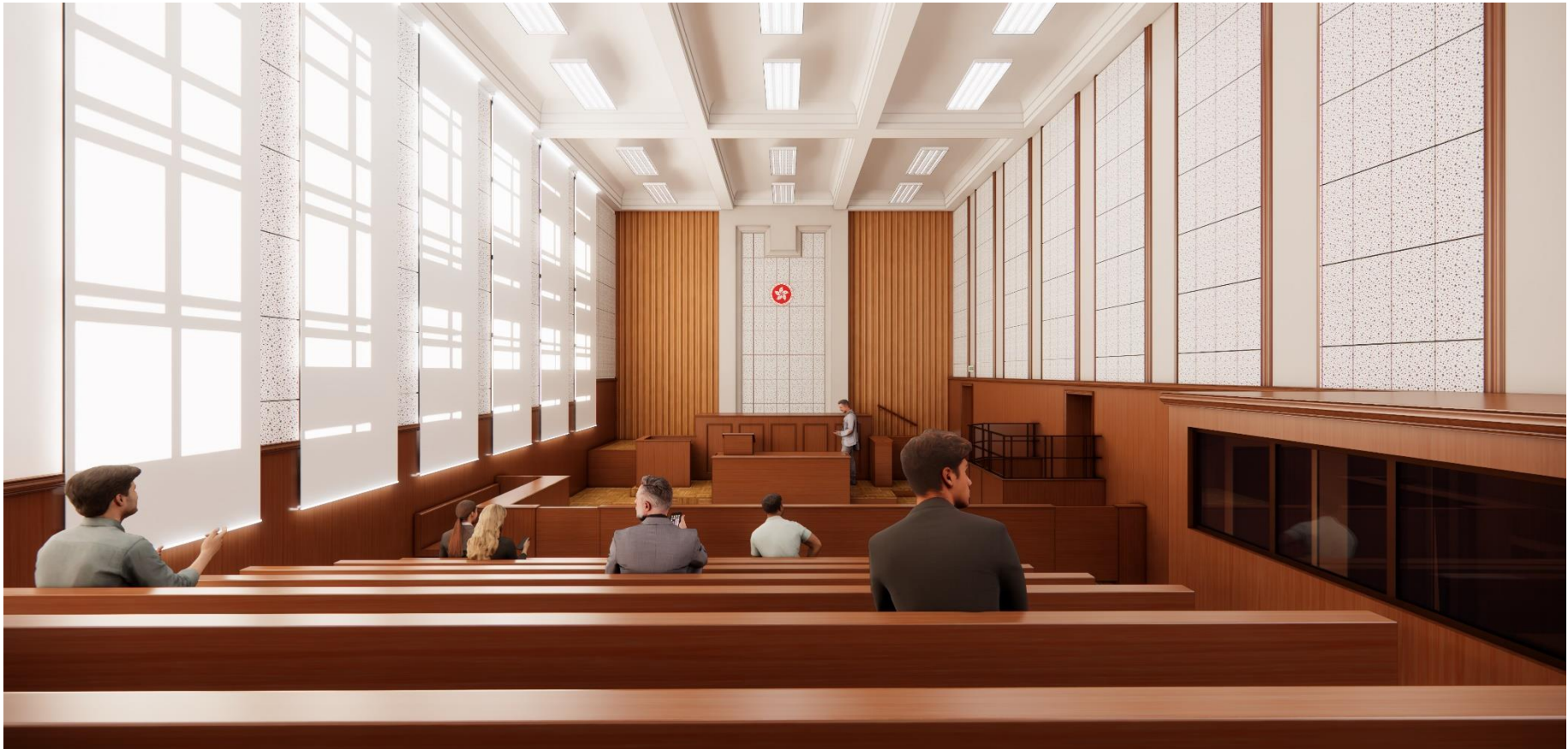


Figure 19. Artist impression of the Conserved Court No. 1



Figure 20. Artist impression of the Lecture Hall D (Split Mode)



Figure 21. Artist impression of the Lecture Hall D (Seminar Mode)



Figure 22. Artist impression of the void and new steps at 4/F



Figure 23. Artist impression of Practice Room at 4/F



Figure 24. Artist impression Reinstated Magistrate's Office at 3/F