

Historic Building Appraisal
Western Magistracy
No. 2A Pok Fu Lam Road, Hong Kong

Western Magistracy (now officially named as Western Magistrates' Court 西區裁判法院) was built in **1965** and was designed by the local architectural practice of **Messrs. Palmer & Turner**. Its founding was initiated by the New Building Scheme in 1957 for settling local magisterial matters of Western District. It was built in response to expansion of the work of Magistrates' courts due to the expanding population in the 1960s. After its completion in 1965, the building functioned as both a magistrate court and a detention for the suspects. Under Hong Kong's legal system, the magistrates' court is at the bottom level of the appellate structure of criminal courts. More serious cases are either transferred to the District Court or the High Court.

*Historical
Interest*

Nowadays, the magistracy building besides providing magistrates courts, also provides office accommodation for various other government departments such as Western Probation Office of Social Welfare Department (社會福利署西區感化辦事處), Labour Relations Service (Hong Kong) (勞資關係西區辦事處), Prosecutions Division Department of Justice (律政司刑事檢控科), Student Travel Allowance Unit of Education Department (教育署學生車船津貼) and Court interpreters (法庭傳譯員).

Western Magistracy is a six-storey building with two basement floors built on an island site at the junction of Pok Fu Lam Road and Queen's Road West. It is an unusual trapezium shape due to the lot's street profile. As befits a building intended to administer law and order and dispense justice, the architectural style is **Neo-Classical**, but in a stylised modern style. The external walls of the ground and first floor storeys are finished with granite tile cladding and the walls to the upper storeys finished with stucco rendering grooved to imitate stonework. Windows are regularly spaced in bands and strong vertical features imitating giant columns are present on the front elevation and the side elevations. The rear elevation simply consists of bands of windows. No decorations or ornamentation appears on the façade. The interior is plain, simple and functional.

*Architectural
Merit*

The building occupies quite a prominent position and being on an island site can be seen from all four sides. This makes it something of a rarity. The visual impact of the Neo-Classical elevations is quite striking and immediately conveys the importance of the building. It should be considered as having built heritage value. Apart from the installation of window mounted room coolers, there is little evidence of alteration and the façade retains its authenticity.

*Rarity,
Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity*

The social value of the building lies in its function as a magistrates' court and the role the magistrates have played in the field of law and order. It is a well known local landmark in Western District. The massive masonry elevation at the vertex site facing down along Pok Fu Lam Road to the Queen's Road gives a strong impression of sincerity and authority.

***Social Value
& Local
Interest***

This area is mainly made up of old residences and certain heritage buildings along the Central and Western Heritage Trail; for example, Old Tsan Yuk Maternity Hospital (舊贊育醫院, now Western District Community Centre), Old Lunatic Asylum Chinese Block (舊華人精神病院, now Eastern Street Methadone Clinic), and the façade of Old Mental Hospital (舊精神病院正立面).

Group Value

If it ceased to be required for a magistrates' court no doubt the building could be fully utilised for government offices.

***Adaptive
Re-use***