

FAX TO:

HA Heritage Advisors
Historic Building Consultants

Tel: and Fax:
Email:

22 August 2012

Executive Secretary
Antiquities and Monuments Office,
136 Nathan Road,
Tsim ShaTsui, Kowloon

Dear Executive Secretary,

**Public Views Invited on the Proposed Gradings of the
Post 1950 Former Central Government Offices**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and I would like to respectfully make the following observations for submission to the AAB please:

1. Single Grading for Single Building

It seems clear from evidence available, that the three wings of the complex were conceived, funded, designed, constructed and then used, as a single harmonious integral cluster, i.e. single building.

References: (from 'Historical and Architectural Appraisal of the Central Government Offices', Chapter 6 Bibliography, PM&T, Hong Kong, September 2009):

1. Minutes between DPW and Colonial Sec Nov 1949 to Feb 1951 (the comment at end page 1, that "the colonnade will provide a break in an otherwise long line of building" is relevant);
2. PWD plan of proposed CGO and Secretariat dated 2 Nov 1949 (the long covered walkway providing the visual linkage between the two blocks is relevant, although it was never built – possibly as it would obstruct vehicular access around the complex?)

Also a cutting from SCMP dated 9 November 1951 (probably quoting a Government Press Release from 8 Nov 1951?):

"This new office block, when completed, will stretch from Garden Road at the east end through to Ice House Street at the west end. As the Colonial Secretariat together with the Council Chamber and the PWD Offices are at present on the central and western portion of the site, it is necessary to erect the new buildings in three sections, so that the departments at present housed on the site can move into the new building as and when it is completed."

After consideration of these reports, minutes and other references, it seems clear the complex should be treated as one single building for grading purposes. Whether the AAB decides to give this single 'building' (or 'assemblage' or 'cluster'), a Grade I, Grade II or grade III rating is of course the personal decision of each member – hopefully using an approved scoring system, based on established scientific guidelines (e.g. Dr Harold Kalman, The Evaluation of Historic Buildings, Canadian Department of the Environment).

Although I personally feel that Grade I is far too high, in comparison with our existing stock of notable Grade I buildings, e.g. St Johns Cathedral, Tang Ancestral Hall Complex, Ha Tsuen, etc.

FAX TO:

2. Method of Voting for Grading

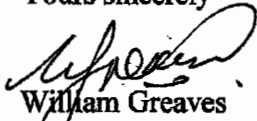
I believe the present 'majority' method used by AAB for voting for grading buildings is basically flawed, in that no consideration is given to the views of those members who do not follow the majority vote.

For example, if ten members vote for Grade I; nine members for Grade II and one member for Grade III, then numerically the combined decision of the AAB should be about Grade II+. It is certainly not a full Grade I !.

A better method would be for each member to award points on an Appraisal Score Sheet and for the sheets to be handed-in to AAB Secretariat for checking (voting decisions of members to be kept confidential).

It is of course most important that such controversial grading decisions are based on a scoring system that is acknowledged to be fair, accurate and in compliance with international standards.

Yours sincerely



William Greaves
Director, Heritage Advisors

To: Hon. D. P. W.
From: Chief Architect.
Date: 28. 11. 49.
Subject: New Secretariat and Government Offices.
Ref: Secretariat 21/641/49.
P.W.D. 2499/46.

I beg to submit herewith the outline of a proposed scheme for a Secretariat and Government offices building situated on the existing sites at present occupied by the Volunteer Headquarters, Colonial Secretariat, P. W. D. and on the property to the West which is at the corner of Ice House Street and Battery Path.

The Site.

The site is conveniently placed amid pleasant surroundings near the centre of the city. It is served by Garden Road and Lower Albert Road for vehicular traffic and by Battery Path from the direction of the city. Easy access for pedestrians from Queen's Road level has been provided by an entrance at Queen's Road level. Elevators from Queen's Road serve all floors up to the existing Secretariat level on Lower Albert Road and also all floors above this.

The Plan.

The plan is dictated by the site and the contours. For the provision of a certain amount of office space the most economical scheme is to be obtained by a development running parallel with Lower Albert Road. The level here is fairly constant and very little site work is involved. The extreme West end is however an exception and the site at this point slopes down steeply to Ice House Street but the advantage to be gained by the direct access to all offices from the Queen's Road level considerably outweighs the cost of its development. This also makes it possible for the new office accommodation to be occupied by departments which require to be readily accessible to the public.

To obviate the flow of pedestrian traffic passing through the offices in the West block an open covered way connects the lift hall at the seventh floor on Ice House Street with the Centre block at Albert Road level.

The buildings consist of an East and Centre block separated by an open colonnade from the West block. The colonnade will provide a break

in the otherwise long line of building and an entrance is obtained through this to the private car park situated on the North side of the buildings.

The Accommodation.

Office accommodation is provided by four floors in the East and West block with eleven floors at the Ice House Street end and five floor at the Garden Road end. The height of the four floors from Albert Road level would be approximately equal to the height of the existing Secretariat block.

The Centre block is six floors in height, the upper two floors of which would contain council chambers and conference rooms. Office units have been designed in bays 18' wide by 16' deep. These may be conveniently subdivided by partitions as required.

The actual office floor accommodation provided in the scheme, exclusive of corridors, stairs and council chambers equals about 150,000 sq. ft.

The Quartering Authority quotes the following departments to be accommodated in a new building (Ref: Sec. No. 21/641/49 dated 12.9.49).

Audit	Inland Revenue	Rating & Valuation
Education	Medical	Secretariat
Forestry, H.O.	P. R. O.	Statistics
Gardens	P. W. D.	Treasury (excluding Revenue Branch).

The total office area required by these departments, allowing for additional space required for expansion in two years time equals about 120,000 sq. ft.

Accommodation is also required for certain temporary departments.

Parking space is provided at two levels on Lower Albert Road and on the area at the North side. Additional parking space would be provided by the demolition of the old stables block at present occupied by the Roads Office. Lower Albert Road has been increased in width from Garden Road to the Secretariat by a setback of the building line on the North side.

The Construction.

The first portion of the scheme to be erected should be the portion of the East block which is planned to occupy the lawn of the Volunteers Headquarters. After this has been completed it will enable the existing accommodation to be vacated and the scheme to be completed in stages. It is proposed that the buildings should be constructed of a reinforced concrete frame with panel walls faced with the dressed granite at present stored at Morrison Hill.

42

1st February, 1951.

To: The Colonial Secretary.

The Committee have considered the designs for the new Government Offices and have reached the following conclusions:-

- (1) The site chosen has only one serious limitation in that it forces the Architect to build a very long building if he is to meet the accommodation needs. This problem has been dealt with in an efficient manner and a most satisfactory plan evolved.
- (2) It is probable that if each member of this Committee was given the plan and asked to produce elevations; three very different schemes will be forthcoming. All that the Committee can say about the elevations is that they consider that there is every indication that a fine building of good quality and suitable appearance is in the process of being evolved. Indeed, the Committee are of the opinion that the standard of appearance of the Architecture generally produced by the Government is such that they can do little but offer friendly advice on very minor points to Mr. Shevan.
- (3) The real problem of this building is one of siting and relationship to the centre of the city. Whether this is good or bad is quite impossible to say until the Abercrombie report, or at least some section of it, has been translated into terms of three dimensional design. It is the opinion of the Committee that a scheme for a large section of the central part of Hong Kong should be prepared at once, without some such plan no advice of real value can be given on the siting of Government buildings.

Signed

R.

E. Wilkin

W. C. Shevan

21/641/49

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Hon. C.S.

Mr. Shewan has shown the site to Professor Gordon Brown and Mr. G.L. Wilson and explained Government's requirements to them.

2. In particular, he stressed the fact that the site chosen and the accommodation required had dictated a long low building for two reasons - firstly on aesthetic grounds and secondly because it had not to interfere unduly with the view from Government House.

3. Professor Gordon Brown and Mr. G.L. Wilson were then handed the plans and elevations for consideration. Mr. Shewan adopted this procedure because he has kept in close contact with the architect during the design stage and he wished to have full and free criticism from the other members of the Committee without causing embarrassment during their deliberations.

4. Their conclusions are contained in the enclosed memo dated 1st February, 1951 from which it will be seen that the plans and elevations have their approval.

5. The Committee properly attaches importance to the site of this building in relationship to the centre of the city and points out that advice of real value on the sites of buildings cannot be given without an approved master plan for the Colony. The Town Planning Office has been disbanded however, and the only work of this nature which is in hand is the lay-out for the Central Reclamation. There is therefore no question of delaying work on the new offices pending the preparation of a plan for the centre of the city.

Robert Brown

D. P. W.
9.2.51.

10 FEB 1951

D.C.S.

The above is a note about the report of Prof. Gordon Brown's Committee at 36⁽⁴²⁾ submitted. They are from 17th's memo of 29/1/50 on page 57

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14/2

Hon C.S.

The Committee's comments are submitted at 36⁽⁴²⁾

Unsub

Y.E.

15/1 M.
14.2.

Seen by Hon. C.S.