



26 August 2012

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

Dear Sir,

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

We would like to offer our views on this subject with a view to preserving this valuable heritage site for the benefit of the public

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. a single building.

**Evidence:**

- a) Financial Secretary's report to LegCo dated 8 March 1950 is very convincing :

"Under Sub-head 43, provision has been made for the commencement of work on a new block of Government Offices..."

(Full extract attached below).

- b) A news report from South China Morning Post, 9 November 1951:

"**This new office block** (*singular*), 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."



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For comparison, an obvious example can be found with a famous UNESCO world heritage site – The Great Wall of China. This is recognised as being a single structure, although it was built in sections at various times spanning more than 100 years, and incorporates many different designs, materials and dimensions. The integrating factor was its single concept and single purpose that decided UNESCO to treat it as a single structure for world heritage appraisal.

### 2. Lyemun Barracks not an appropriate precedent

An argument previously raised against treating this complex as a single ensemble, was that the buildings in Lyemun Barracks were in the past graded individually. However, these buildings were planned over a long period and comprise completely different uses, eg barrack blocks, church, primary school, workshops, etc, and should not be considered as a "single harmonious cluster".

### 3. Grade I status should be applied to the whole building

It has already been convincingly established by expert panels, the AAB and from the PMT Study, that sections of the building (or 'the harmonious single cluster') are worthy of Grade I status – and it is therefore justifiable and logical that the whole entity or ensemble, should adopt this single well-merited grading. After all, it would be ridiculous for one part of City Hall (e.g., the former Urban Council Chamber), to be graded differently from the remainder of the complex just because one visiting overseas expert considered it to be "...the least good piece of architectural design out of the three."

**In summary**, the entire site already has a preliminary Grade I and that should extend to the entire site and everything on it. If there is a demonstrated need to also grade the buildings, they are an "integral harmonious cluster" and should be given a single Grade I because of this.

Yours faithfully

John Bowden  
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Under Sub-head 43, provision has been made for the commencement of work on a new block of central Government offices. Departments are now scattered all over the city and a sum of approximately \$750,000 is expended in rents. It is estimated that a central block of offices can be built for a sum of about \$8 million, so the interest represents a great deal less than is now being paid in rents. Such a scheme would therefore be a sound investment and it would also effect considerable economies in staff and recurrent expenditure. Moreover there would be a greater degree of co-ordination in Government work, as instead of sometimes inadequate telephone conversations, officers would, without loss of time, be able to discuss problems face to face with representatives of the department concerned. The building of the new offices will meet a need which has long been felt. The block will stretch across the present Secretariat site from the Defence Force Headquarters on Garden Road, right through to Ice House Street. The offices will be built in sections, so that as the buildings now on the site are demolished, alternative accommodation will be available. The preliminary design for the new block is a pleasing one, but of course final drawings have not yet been made. The present proposal is that offices to which the public require most frequent access should be at the Ice House Street end, and that lifts should be installed

[www.legco.gov.hk/1950/h500308.pdf](http://www.legco.gov.hk/1950/h500308.pdf)