

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL BRIEF

FORMER MARINE POLICE HEADQUARTERS

INTRODUCTION

At the meeting of the Executive Council on 25 June 2002, the Council ADVISED and the Chief Executive ORDERED that the project to preserve, restore and convert the former Marine Police Headquarters (MPHQ) in Tsim Sha Tsui (the Project) for tourism related uses should be implemented on the basis of the framework set out at paragraphs 6 to 7 below.

BACKGROUND AND ARGUMENT

- A 2. The MPHQ and the accommodation block of the former Fire Station are declared monuments under the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (Cap.53). A site plan is at Annex A. The Marine Police vacated the buildings in November 1996. A number of attempts by concerned departments to put the buildings to beneficial use with public sector resources have been unsuccessful.
3. There has been increasing public demand for more to be done to preserve our heritage assets. Given budgetary and other constraints on Government, there is a strong case for a new approach to preserve and exploit these facilities. One of the most suitable ways to do this is to engage private sector resources in suitable projects with commercial potential. This will help inject new ideas and a new dynamism into the process to convert our heritage assets to beneficial use. This will also enable Government to focus its resources on preservation work which does not offer a potential for private sector participation.
4. The MPHQ is a rare example of Victorian-colonial architecture preserved in its original form and integrity. Given proper conservation and creative use, it could be turned into a major attraction for both local and overseas visitors. The strategic location of the site and its heritage value offer a good potential for engaging the private sector to achieve the dual objectives of preserving and restoring the site,

and developing it as a heritage tourism facility, in line with successful overseas examples such as Covent Garden in London and Faneuil Hall in Boston.

Constraints on Development

5. The Project will be subject to considerable site specific constraints, as well as constraints arising from requirements to preserve the valuable heritage of the site. Constraints include -

(a) ***limits on the potential floor area which may be developed for commercial purposes***

The need to preserve the historic setting of the site imposes a limit on the extent to which additional space for commercial developments may be developed on site to enhance the commercial viability of the Project. Subject to a detailed survey, we estimate that the Project will only allow for around 11,500m² in commercial gross floor area (GFA), comprising 4,300m² of GFA of the existing buildings and around two floors of commercial developments below the southern part of the platform.

(b) ***constraints on basement developments***

Most of the site sits on an elevated platform at a level of about 14 metres above Hong Kong Principal Datum. There is an extensive web of disused underground tunnels below the platform. The exact alignment and condition of this tunnel network are not fully known. Requirements for investigating, recording, preserving, and stabilizing the tunnels to meet safety and preservation requirements would add to the costs of development. In addition, the proposed railway tunnels for the Kowloon Southern Link will run underneath the site and this will prohibit basement developments below the level of Salisbury Road.

(c) ***constraints regarding access***

The ramp along Canton Road, which is sub-standard, currently provides access for both vehicles and pedestrians to the platform. Upon completion of the development, the ramp will have to be removed to provide for road

realignment and footpath and road widening of Canton Road to improve vehicular and pedestrian circulation in the area. There will be a need to provide new access to the platform.

(d) *cost of restoration and maintenance*

The cost for restoring and maintaining the historic buildings will impose a considerable financial burden on the Project proponent. As an indication, routine annual maintenance of the vacant buildings and the leased premises⁽¹⁾ on the site currently costs around \$500,000, and planned maintenance on a four-year cycle to prevent deterioration of the buildings costs around \$6 million. A broad brush estimate also shows that basic buildings work to restore the monument, without the necessary fitting out, conversion works and building services, will cost around \$15 million⁽²⁾.

The Proposal

6. The constraints described in paragraph 5 above impose uncertainty and hence risk to the Project. The implementation framework needs to guard against imposing non-essential requirements which may erode the financial viability of the Project. Accordingly, the Project will be implemented based on the following framework -

- (a) the Project will be awarded through an open competitive process;
- (b) mandatory requirements would be minimized to provide more flexibility to prospective proponents - proposals would need to meet two key requirements, namely the project proponent's demonstrated financial capability to carry through the Project, and mandatory conservation requirements;
- (c) the successful proponent will be responsible for preserving,

Notes

- (1) The former fire station and quarters and the adjoining structure are leased to Yau Ma Tei and Tsim Sha Tsui Culture and Arts Association and the Welfare Handicrafts Ltd. The unused buildings cover the former MPHQ main building, stable block and signal tower.
- (2) The actual cost of restoration will be subject to the intended use of the buildings and the scope of works required, and could be substantially higher.

restoring, repairing and renovating the site and the buildings, and will be responsible for the future management, operation, and maintenance of the development;

- (d) the successful proponent will need to complete all necessary statutory procedures as required under relevant legislation, including the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (Cap.53), the Town Planning Ordinance (Cap. 131), the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance (Cap. 499) and the Buildings Ordinance (Cap. 123) before beginning construction work on site;
- (e) in the light of the focus on preserving the historic buildings for tourism purposes, assessment of proposals will place greater emphasis on heritage preservation, the creativity of the proposals, and economic and tourism benefits than on the payment to Government. Proposals received will be assessed in the following categories, namely -
 - (i) heritage preservation;
 - (ii) design and technical aspects;
 - (iii) economic and tourism value; and
 - (iv) payment to Government.

A detailed marking scheme will be approved by the Central Tender Board before tender. The Administration will also attach to the tender document information on the marking system to provide transparency and to ensure better understanding of the objectives of the exercise;

- (f) an assessment panel comprising representatives of concerned bureaux and departments will be set up to assess proposals based on the marking scheme; and
- (g) in view of the limited commercial viability of the Project, it is necessary to allow a reasonably long period within which the successful proponent could generate a return on investment and would be allowed flexibility to manage and operate the development. Accordingly, the successful proponent will be offered a 50-year land grant for the site.

7. The Administration have taken a number of proactive measures to minimize uncertainty and to improve the commercial potential of this project -

- (a) the Administration have drawn up guidelines to spell out the minimum conservation requirements which must be met by proponents. Proposals which fail to comply with the conservation requirements will not be accepted even if they score well in other assessment criteria. Subject to these requirements, proponents will have flexibility to put forward development concepts which make business sense;
- (b) the Administration have consulted the Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB), which advises the Antiquities Authority on matters concerning the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (Cap.53), on the conservation guidelines in draft form. A copy of the draft guidelines, without appendices, is at Annex B. The Administration have informed AAB of our plan to go for a private sector development in respect of the Project. The guidelines will include mandatory conservation requirements (item (a) above). Members of AAB have no objection in general to the draft conservation guidelines subject to minor refinements to some of its terms and conditions;
- (c) since the successful proponent will need to seek the Town Planning Board's (TPB) approval for his proposed development concept, the Administration have also consulted the TPB on the Planning Brief for the site and have received the Board's support in general; and
- (d) the Administration have carried out preliminary ground investigation, which has helped us to define the minimum area where preservation and recording of the underground tunnels would be a mandatory requirement (item (a) above). This leaves flexibility to proponents to determine the extent of commercial developments under majority of the platform.

B

Timetable

8 The Administration will invite tender in September 2002. The target is to award the land grant in early 2003.

FINANCIAL AND STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

9 This Project envisages private sector involvement in making use of the heritage site as a tourism-themed commercial development. The Government will grant the Project to the successful proponent through a 50-year land grant. It is not possible to predict the revenue arising from this Project in view of the considerable site constraints. The costs for annual regular maintenance and major maintenance on a 4-year cycle are \$500,000 and \$6 million respectively are now borne by the Government. The annual cost for site management is \$430,000. These costs will be saved upon implementation of the Project. Implementation of the Project takes advantage of an established mechanism for land disposal and will minimize additional staff requirement for future supervision. There should not be any staffing implication.

ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

10. It is not possible to assess the economic impact of a project of this nature on its own. However, the involvement of the private sector in the development of a heritage tourism attraction making use of existing monuments will help open up a new avenue for preservation work, and will provide a model for possible developments along similar lines in future. The Project will also help to broaden the range of our tourist attractions within a prime tourist area. This will have spin off economic benefits associated with tourism development.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

11. The Project will be a Designated Project under the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance (Cap.499). An environmental permit will be required for the Project prior to its construction and operation.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

12. The Project should not have major sustainability implications. It should help us take a step forward to put these historic buildings to beneficial reuse through private sector investment while preserving their historical value.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

13. The Administration have consulted AAB, TPB and the Yau Tsim Mong District Council. They support the general approach to private sector involvement in a heritage tourism development and more emphasis on preservation, creativity and tourism benefits in the assessment process. Subject to minor refinements to specific terms and conditions of the draft conservation guidelines, Members of AAB have no major problem with the draft which will form part of the tender document. TPB also approved the Planning Brief for the site.

PUBLICITY

14. To publicize the exercise, the Administration will issue a Government Gazette and a press release, place advertisements in the local press, inform the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices overseas, consulates and trade commissions of other countries in Hong Kong and Chambers of Commerce. The Administration will also inform parties who have expressed an interest in the Project before, and launch other publicity drives such as an “Open Day” of the MPHQ nearer the time.

DRAFTING OFFICER

15. The drafting officer for this paper is Mrs Erika Hui, Assistant Commissioner for Tourism (2) (Tel. No. 2810 3137).

Tourism Commission
Economic Development and Labour Bureau
3 July 2002

Technical Requirements For Former Marine Police Headquarters

1. Definitions

In the Technical Requirements the following words mean:

- "Historic Site" – the monument declared under The Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (Cap. 53) as shown on the attached site plan at Appendix II.
- "Historic Buildings" –
- Main Building (No. 1)
 - Stable Block (No. 2)
 - Signal Tower (Round House) (No. 3)
 - Accommodation Block of The Former Fire Station (No. 5)
 - Main Building of The Former Fire Station (No. 6)
- The numbering 1 – 6 refers to the attached site plan at Appendix II.
- "Reversible" – an act or process which can be undone or removed at a later date without causing material injury, loss, damage or change to the Site or the Historic Buildings as the case may be.
- "Site" – Kowloon Inland Lot No. 11161 as shown coloured pink on the plan annexed to the Tender Conditions.

The Technical Requirements shall be given a fair and liberal interpretation as will best ensure the attainment of the object of these Requirements according to their true intent, meaning and spirit.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The majority of the Site is declared as a Monument under The Antiquities & Monuments Ordinance (Cap. 53). Therefore before any acts (as referred to in section 6(1)(a) and (b) of this Ordinance) are done on the Site, such as excavation, building or other works, planting or felling of trees or interference with a "monument" (as defined), a permit must first be obtained from the Antiquities Authority (presently the Secretary for Home Affairs).
- 2.2 Reasonable conditions may be imposed by the Antiquities Authority in the exercise of that Authority's powers under the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance before or after the Close of Tender, in addition to any included in the tender documents.

3. Main Heritage Principles

3.1 Layout of the Site

- 3.1.1 The integrity of the Site should be maintained.
- 3.1.2 Without limiting 3.1.1, no buildings as defined in Section 2 of the Buildings Ordinance (Cap. 123) may be constructed or erected anywhere on the Site unless:
- the building is a temporary building [as defined in Regulation 50 of the Building (Planning) Regulations (Cap. 123F)] and respects the appearance of the Historic Site and the Historic Buildings; and
 - the building is not constructed or erected on the open platform of the Site to the South of the Main Building or Stable Block.

3.2 Historic Buildings

The Historic Buildings should be preserved in-situ, repaired and restored as necessary.

3.3 External Elevations

- 3.3.1 No major alterations or additions are permitted to the external of any of the Historic Buildings which are non-Reversible.

3.3.2 The external painting system used should be Reversible and together with the proposed signage, should not adversely affect the style and historic appearance of the Site and the Historic Buildings.

3.4 Interiors

3.4.1 No alterations or additions are permitted which will adversely affect the structural stability of any of the Historic Buildings. No major alterations or additions should be made to original load-bearing walls and other structural elements of the Historic Buildings. The Purchaser should remove the later partitioning as shown on the drawings of Appendix II.

3.4.2 All proposed partitioning, ceilings, and alterations and additions should be constructed so as to be Reversible.

3.4.3 The Significant Historic Items as listed at Appendix I should be preserved in-situ, repaired and restored as necessary, in order to maintain the historic integrity of the Historic Buildings. If and to the extent these Items are not retained in-situ, they should be carefully removed or dismantled, repaired as necessary and used or displayed elsewhere on the Site, or delivered to a Government site for storage (at the Purchaser's expense), as directed by the Antiquities Authority.

3.4.4 The internal colour schemes should be Reversible.

3.5 Landscape

3.5.1 The requirement for a permit for planting or felling trees under section 6(1)(a) of The Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (Cap. 53) should also be observed.

3.6 Retaining Walls

3.6.1 One of the existing retaining walls of the Site is constructed of historic granite stonework blocks and has high historical value (as shown on the site plan). If the wall is to be demolished as part of the project, any demolished historic granite stonework blocks should be either reused elsewhere on the Site or failing which, they should be transported to a Government site (at the Purchaser's expense), as directed by the Antiquities Authority.

3.7 Sub-ground area of the Site including tunnels

3.7.1 If the Purchaser proposes to redevelop the sub-ground area of the Site including the existing historic tunnels, he should:

- (a) excavate, expose, preserve intact and where appropriate reinstate to the maximum degree possible at least 15 metres in length of tunnel(s) beginning from portal 'A' as shown on the site plan.
- (b) excavate, expose and make a full photographic and cartographic record of at least 30 metres in length of tunnel(s) beginning from portal 'B' as shown on the site plan; and
- (c) carry out any work which may affect any other parts of the sub-ground area of the Site with all due care, in order that any valuable historic evidence uncovered, including tunnels, may be recorded (at the Purchaser's expense) to the satisfaction of the Antiquities Authority.

3.8 All fossils, coins, articles of value or antiquity and structures and other remains or things of geological, historical or archaeological interest discovered on the Site shall, as between the Government and the Purchaser, be the absolute property of the Government and the Purchaser shall take reasonable precautions to prevent his workers or any other persons from removing or damaging any such article or thing and shall immediately upon discovery thereof and before removal acquaint the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services of such discovery and carry out at the expense of the Purchaser the instructions of the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services as to the disposal of the same.

TECHNICAL GUIDELINES FOR FORMER MARINE POLICE HEADQUARTERS

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Site and the Historic Buildings offer a wonderful opportunity for an exercise in conservation to international standards and in promoting tourism.

2. Objectives

The heritage objectives for the proposed project are:

- 2.1 To produce a restoration of a complete Victorian-Colonial complex to an international standard that will be acknowledged as one of the best of its kind in the Asia-Pacific region.
- 2.2 To produce an exciting, economically viable reuse of the Site, while preserving the setting and the fabric of the Historic Buildings, in order to impress residents and visitors.
- 2.3 To make limited and controlled intervention to the Site and the Historic Buildings in order that their future heritage value are not diminished by inappropriate and non-Reversible alterations or additions.

3. Approach

- 3.1 In order that the project may be carried out to an international standard, reference should be made to established international principles. The Purchaser [as defined in General Condition 13(a)] should respect the principles in the Charter of Venice (ICOMOS) and the Burra Charter (ICOMOS Australia) in force from time to time (and whether or not in force in Hong Kong) in so far as they are not inconsistent with these Technical Requirements and Technical Guidelines.

4. Main Principles

4.1 Interiors

- 4.1.1 The internal colour schemes should be Reversible, but there are no other conditions as to choice of colours and the designers are encouraged to use their imagination to project their desired image.
- 4.1.2 Significant Historic Items: Favourable consideration will be given by the tender assessment panel to the sensitive retention in-situ or alternatively their relocation and display elsewhere on the Site of the maximum number of Significant Historic Items.

4.2 Landscape

- 4.2.1 Many mature trees and shrubs presently on the Site have been acquired from overseas and have historic, as well as landscape value and should therefore be preserved as far as possible.
- 4.2.2 An unobstructed open space in front of the Main Building was an original and prominent feature of the Site and this should be reinstated in order to provide an impressive and authentic setting for the Historic Buildings.