

Task Force on Harbourfront Developments on Hong Kong Island

For discussion
on 12 January 2012

TFHK/01/2012

Proposal to Build a New Centre By Hong Kong Architecture Centre

PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to seek Members' views on the proposal by Hong Kong Architecture Centre (HKAC) to build their new centre at the junction of Connaught Road Central, Rumsey Street and Tak Man Street in Sheung Wan. The proposed site was an existing traffic island under a flyover.

BACKGROUND

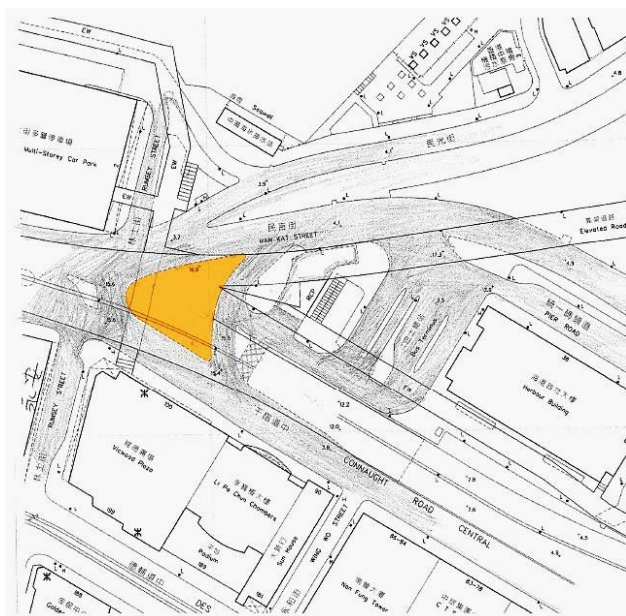
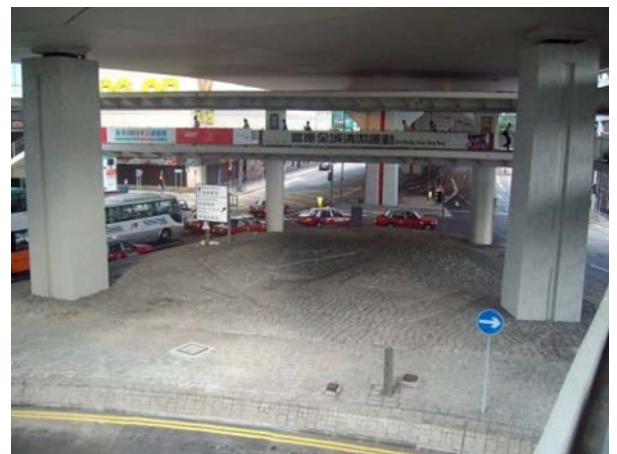
2. HKAC is a non-profit making institution that aims to bring architecture to the public by architectural education and appreciation, and promote conservation of environment, heritage and culture. Since its establishment in 2006, HKAC has run talks, classes, workshops, exhibitions, tours and other activities for the public and visitors to Hong Kong.
3. In search of a new centre location, HKAC was asked to explore innovative uses of left-over urban space instead of more conventional heritage buildings. HKAC found a sizable vacant traffic island in Sheung Wan that can be potentially linked to Central, Sheung Wan MTR Station at Vicwood Plaza, Macau Ferry Terminal at Shun Tak Centre and Rumsey Street Carpark via the elevated walkway system.
4. Despite of various technical constraints, such as traffic sightline, access for structure and service maintenance, HKAC has found an interesting solution. A round building is proposed to provide venue for their activities and house their administration and archive while its rooftop will be integrated with the existing footbridges to create an elevated plaza for events and their outlets where public can access easily their services and be engaged in their activities (Please refer to **Appendix**).
5. As the site is currently zoned as "Road", HKAC has consulted the relevant government departments such as Highways Department and Transport Department and their support was obtained. The proposal was then presented to and endorsed by the Land and Development

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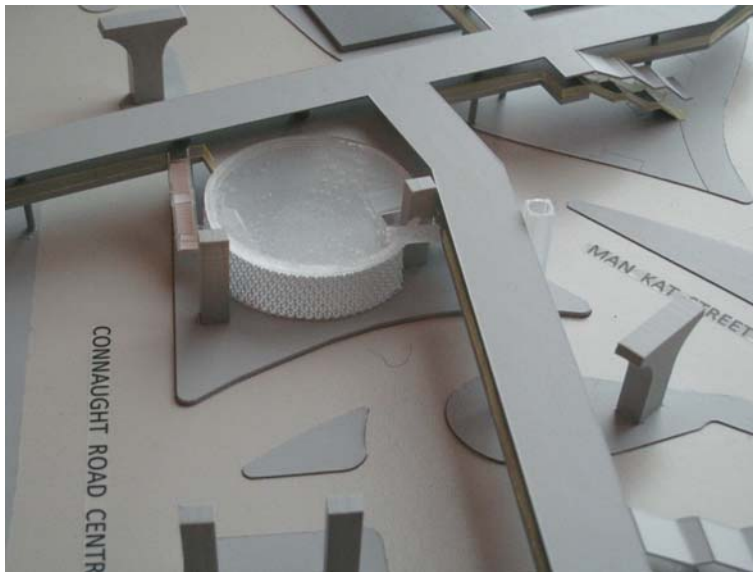
Advisory Committee (LDAC) in early 2011. Operation proposal was further submitted to Development Bureau and in-principle policy support was further given by the Bureau.

6. Though the site is marginally visible from the Harbour, the site is close to where the elevated walkway along Connaught Road transcends to the portion of walkway fronting the harbour in front of Rumsey Road. The proposed centre may help to bring more people to the said portion of walkway where public and tourist can enjoy the harbour view.



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PUBLIC BENEFIT OF THE PROJECT

7. The project has the following benefits to the public:

Environmental Benefit

- The project will help improve the environment under the flyover as well as the walking experience along the elevated walkway from Sheung Wan to Central. It will demonstrate how creative design can make difficult site usable and how valuable land resources can be optimized in Hong Kong. It will also create interesting urban space and architectural icons that carry distinctive Hong Kong characters.

Social Benefit

- The new centre will be used to promote public knowledge and appreciation of architecture, enrich life experience of Hong Kong people and visitors, and deepen understanding of the challenge and social dimension of architecture, especially for the young people.

Economic Benefit

- The centre in this highly accessible location is likely to enjoy high patronage. Income from its activities so generated will enable the Centre to be operated in a self-sustaining way. The centre will create jobs not only for the working force, but also for the retired, students, housewives and other part-time workers and promote

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development of architectural and building related industries.

ALIGNMENT WITH GOVERNEMENT POLICY

8. The project closely aligns with the following government policies which were set out in the Policy Address 2010-11:

- to help social enterprises sustain their development (para.146);
- to allow arts and culture to reach out to the community (para. 127);
- to promote creative industry (architecture is one of the disciplines), which is identified as one of the six industries where HK enjoys advantages (para. 97);
- to promote healthy and sustainable development of the tourism industry (para. 103); and
- to promote sustainable built environment (para. 40).

HARBOUR PLANNING PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES

9. In preparing the proposal, due reference and careful attention had been made to the Harbour Planning Principles and Guidelines:

No unnecessary land formation

- The site does not involve any reclamation of Victoria Harbour. It just makes use of a left-over traffic island surrounded by major trunk road.

Diversity of use

- The site is surrounded by commercial developments and roads. The project is for “G/IC” use and will add a new elevated plaza and a cultural attraction for public recreational, leisure and cultural uses.

Urban design

- The proposed building is a low-rise round building with interesting pavilions and installations on its accessible rooftop. It contrasts significantly in scale and design from the large scale utilitarian design of infrastructure and rectilinear high rise commercial

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buildings around it. It is designed to glow like a beacon and light up then gloomy environment under flyovers. It can easily become a new landmark and an attractive icon in this part of Hong Kong Island. Though the site is set back from the harbourfront, the north side of the site is quite open and such landmark may be marginally visible from the Harbour.

Connectivity to harbourfront

- Though the centre is not immediately fronting the Harbour, it is at a strategic location where pedestrians enter the harbourfront portion of elevated walkways. Visitors, both locals and tourists coming to HKAC could potentially continue their journey to the harbourfront and enjoy the splendid view of the Harbour.

Permeability

- The centre is carefully profiled to avoid obstructing sightlines of surrounding vehicular traffic. Its small size and round geometry will minimize its physical or visual blockage to the neighbouring environment.

Streetscape design

- Although the site is not surrounded by pedestrian footpath, its roof top creates a new urban space at the junctions of two footbridges. The open plaza design with ongoing activities and interesting shops and pavilions around creates interesting “bridgescape” and enliven the walking experience of the pedestrians using the elevated walkways.

Sustainable development

- The centre will optimize the use of unused urban land. Its structure, enclosure and fittings will be built from recycled building waste. This very good example of sustainable architecture will reinforce public awareness on the issues.

Public engagement

- After seeking the Task Force’s views, HKAC will consult the Central & Western District Council (C&W DC) before making a section 16 town planning application to the Town Planning Board tentatively in January 2012.

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Management

- The building will be self-financed and managed by HKAC and will not incur management burden to government or community.

STATUS OF THE PROJECT

10. As mentioned above, the project has obtained support from LDAC, Highways Department, Transport Department and Development Bureau. Tentative programme of the project is summarized as below:

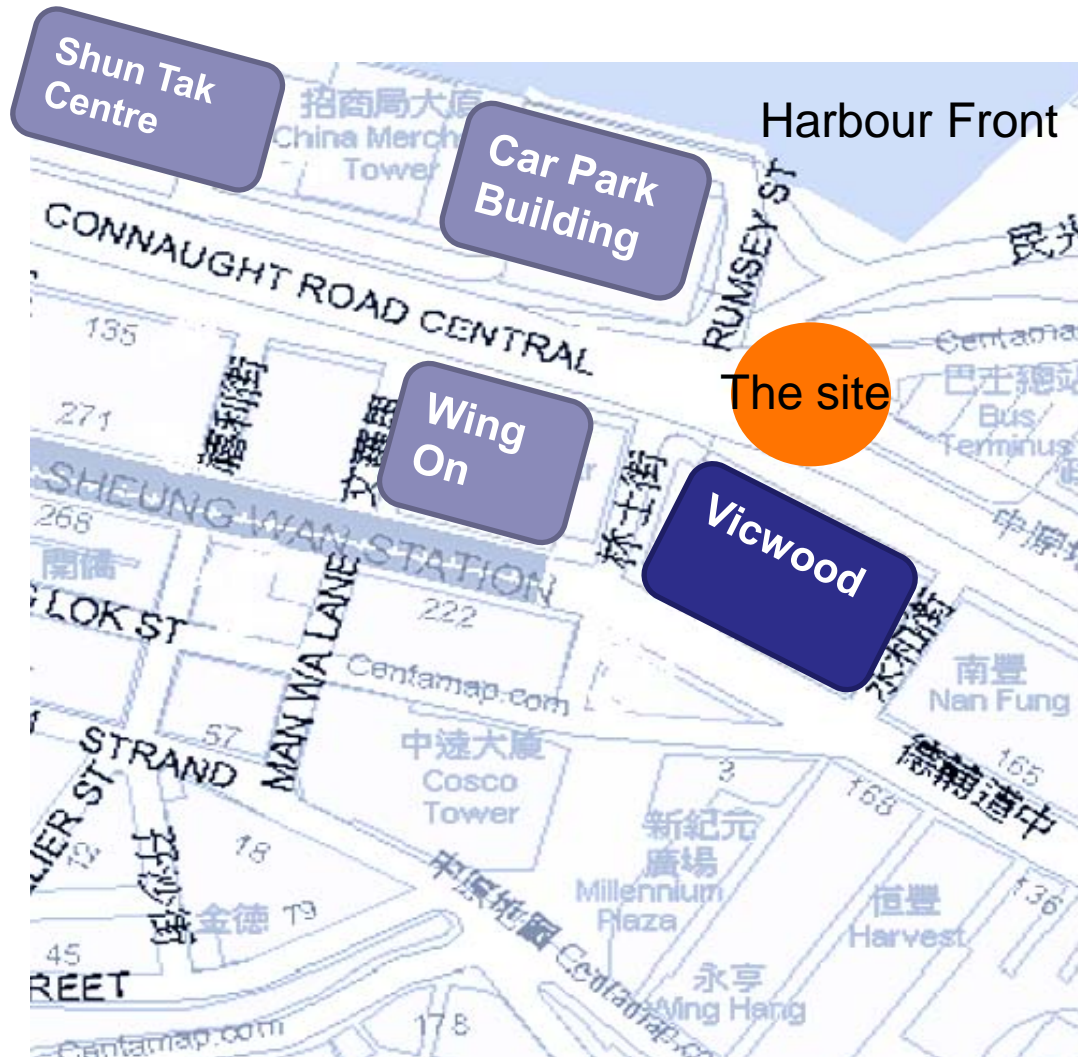
Consult C&W DC	January 2012
Section 16 Town Planning Application	January 2012
Final Report to LDAC	February 2012
Application for Short-term Tenancy	April 2012

ADVICE SOUGHT

11. Members are invited to comment on the proposal.

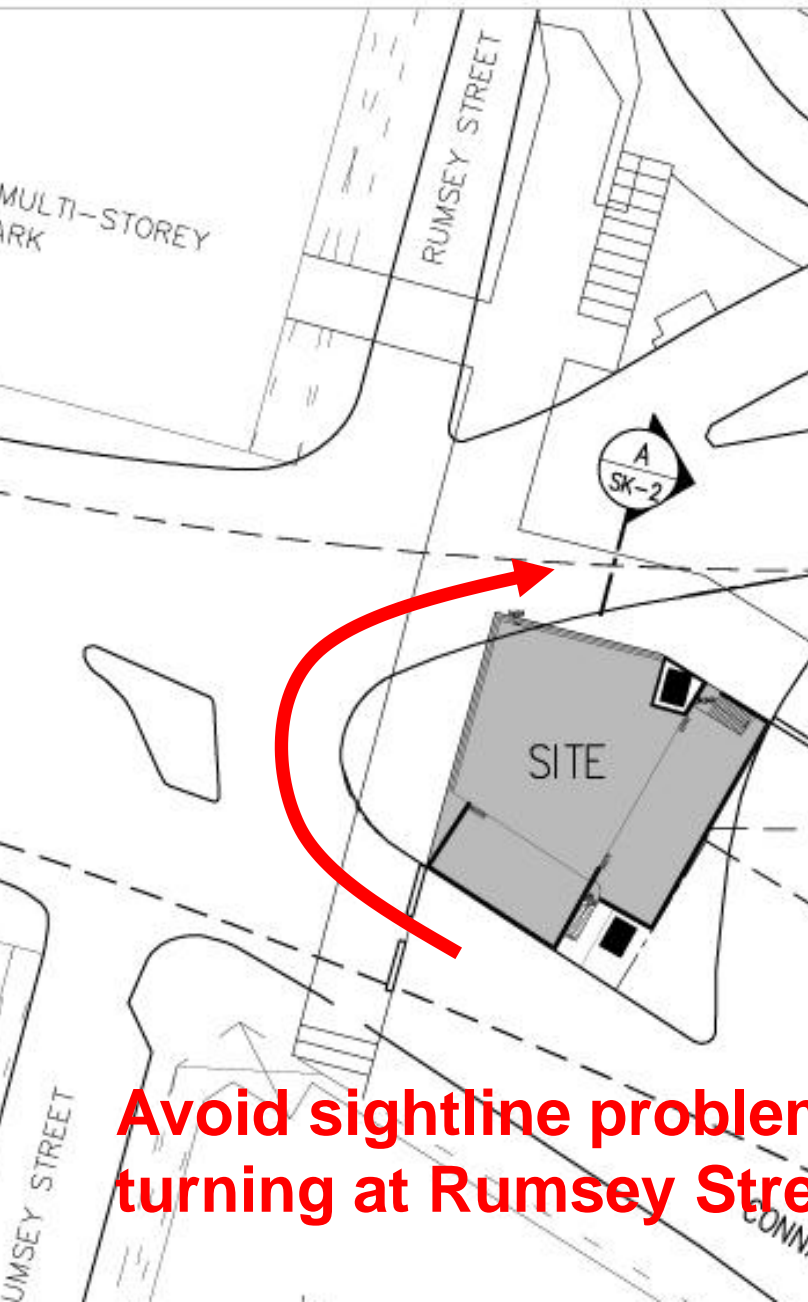
**Hong Kong Architecture Centre
January 2012**

Location Plan



Existing Environment / Premises





Avoid sightline problem to westbound traffic turning at Rumsey Street



