

# Task Force on Harbourfront Developments on Hong Kong Island

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For discussion  
on 10 February 2015

TFHK/03/2015

## Proposed University of Chicago Center in Hong Kong at the ex-Victoria Road Detention Centre, Victoria Road, Mount Davis

### PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members on the University of Chicago Center in Hong Kong (“**Proposed Development**”) being proposed at the ex-Victoria Road Detention Centre (“**ex-VRDC**”) in Mount Davis by the University of Chicago Hong Kong Foundation. It also seeks Members views on the related S16 Planning Application being processed by the Town Planning Board.

2. The ex-VRDC consists of 6 buildings, namely Blocks A, B, B Annex, C and D, in addition to the disused gun battery and adjacent magazine structures. These buildings within the ex-VRDC site formed part of the former Jubilee Battery as part of Hong Kong’s pre-WW2 defenses, before being used as a mess and quarters for the British Army’s Royal Engineers, and thereafter as a detention center up until 1997. The ex-VRDC was declared a Grade 3 historic building on 22.01.2010. The Proposed Development consists of a modern 3-storey structure that “floats” above the preserved heritage buildings on the western side of Victoria Road. The heritage buildings will be adaptively reused as far as practical.

3. A Section 16 Planning Application was submitted on 14.01.2015 (Application No. A/H1/98) for the portion of the ex-VRDC west of Victoria Road within the “Residential (Group C)3” Zone and “Road” for Proposed Educational Institution with minor relaxation of Plot Ratio and Site Coverage Restrictions.

### BACKGROUND

4. The University of Chicago Booth School of Business is an internationally top-ranked business school. It has recently relocated its Asia Campus from Singapore to Hong Kong in order to advance and strengthen its mission and services in the region. The University is currently operating out of temporary facilities at Cyberport, whilst developing plans for a permanent campus at the ex-VRDC.

5. The proposal for the ex-VRDC Site was developed in response to a global tender by the HKSAR Government to non-profit making educational institutions to operate self-financing full time locally accredited programs at the Application Site under the Education Bureau’s (“**EDB**”) Land Grant

## **Task Force on Harbourfront Developments on Hong Kong Island**

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TFHK/03/2015

Scheme for Post Secondary Education Program providers. The University of Chicago was announced as the successful proposed allocatee in May 2013 on the basis of their proposal to develop a new, modern educational facility that would integrate with and sustain the preservation of heritage buildings on site.

6. The design intention of the Proposed Development is to be as compact as possible with a special emphasis on effective adaptive re-use. This includes incorporating the heritage buildings into the Proposed Development's design whilst preserving their external facades and distinguishing them from the new construction. Block C which is of lower historical value than the other heritage buildings on the Site is the only block that will be demolished.

7. As such, the design strives to achieve a highly logical layout and barrier-free circulation pattern throughout the entire Site. The Proposed Development respects the existing topography by being elevated above the existing landscape and its unique architecture maximizes sunlight penetration and air flows throughout the Site.

8. The Architectural Drawings and Technical Schedule are provided at **Annexes A and B, respectively**. The Overall Conceptual Landscape Proposal is attached at **Annex C**.

### **MAJOR PUBLIC PLANNING GAINS**

9. The Proposed Development will allow the following major Public Planning Gains:-

- (a) Opening of a visual and ventilation corridor between Victoria Road and Victoria Harbour for passersby on Victoria Road, which was previously blocked by the ex-VRDC;
- (b) Focal spaces including the Heritage Courtyard, Grand Plaza, and View Terrace overlooking Victoria Harbour serve as a communal areas for social interaction, and an opportunity for the public to enjoy a public space by the water;
- (c) Trails to connect to the existing disused battery and adjacent magazine structure to enable public access and interpretation of history anytime day and night. These trails will be connected to existing trails in the surrounding area, and will also be connected to the Mount Davis Trail being proposed by the Central and Western District Council, for the enjoyment of passersby along the shorefront environment; and

## **Task Force on Harbourfront Developments on Hong Kong Island**

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TFHK/03/2015

- (d) Effective adaptive reuse of graded heritage buildings as an educational institution, enables the Proposed Development to showcase Hong Kong's sustainable development efforts on the shores of Victoria Harbour as follows:
- a. Creating spaces for social interaction under an umbrella of reviving and celebrating the ex-VRDC's history;
  - b. Proposed landscaping works and the protection of existing vegetation via an elevated structure ensure compatibility of the Proposed Development with the surrounding heavily vegetated slopes of Mount Davis; and
  - c. Nurturing the next generation of business leaders helps to sustain the economic prowess of Hong Kong and the Asia-Pacific Region. As an educational institution project, the Proposed Development will support Hong Kong's drive to become a competitive "education hub" and will diversify post-secondary opportunities.

### **HARBOUR PLANNING PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES**

10. The Proposed Development has been assessed against the Harbour Planning Principles and Guidelines as summarized below:

#### Preserving Victoria Harbour

11. The unique flowing architecture of the Proposed Development will complement the surrounding natural contours around Mount Davis, thus preserving the view, character and setting of that section of Victoria Harbour. The Proposed Development does not include any reclamation from the Harbour.

#### Stakeholder Engagement/Public Consultation

12. A proactive stakeholder engagement approach has been undertaken, including meetings with Government and the Central & Western District Council. A press briefing was also undertaken on 20.01.2015.

13. In addition, the S16 Planning Application is subject to statutory public review and comment process as required under the Town Planning Ordinance (Cap. 131).

#### Sustainable Development

14. Economic, social and environmental concerns have been carefully

# Task Force on Harbourfront Developments on Hong Kong Island

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TFHK/03/2015

considered. The Proposed Development's elevated structure will avoid affecting the existing topography and vegetation as much as possible, and allow sunlight and airflow through the Site. Moreover, the opening of the wall of the ex-VRDC will enhance visual permeability from Victoria Road towards Victoria Harbour, as well as open up views of the heritage buildings to passersby. The Proposed Development itself will also directly benefit the sustainable growth of Hong Kong's educational and manpower resources.

15. Relevant technical assessments have also been prepared for the S16 Planning Submission which demonstrate the technical sustainability of the Proposed Development. Moreover, the Applicant will be pursuing BEAM Plus Certification for the Proposed Development.

## Integrated Planning

16. The Proposed Development is an example of integrating heritage buildings within a new educational complex in order to extend the functionality of the Site to meet modern-day needs. At a larger-scale, the Proposed Development is fully integrated into the surrounding environment in terms of an organic design that complements the natural topographic contours and a comprehensive landscape proposal that blends into the surrounding natural vegetation.

17. Further, the landscape proposal enables integration of the heritage features within the Site with the future Mount Davis Trail proposed by Central & Western District Council.

## Proactive Harbour Enhancement

18. The Proposed Development will be a new architectural icon for Hong Kong. Conceptual 3D rendering images are provided at **Annex D**.

## Vibrant Harbour/ Diversity of Uses

19. The Proposed Development will add to the diversity of uses along Victoria Harbour being the first educational institution. The Proposed Development, as a prestigious world-renowned tertiary educational institution, will help diversify the land uses and international image of Victoria Harbour.

## Accessible Harbour

20. At the moment, Victoria Harbour is visually closed off along Victoria Road. The opening of the wall and elevated design concept will enable direct visual access from Victoria Road to Victoria Harbour.

## **Task Force on Harbourfront Developments on Hong Kong Island**

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TFHK/03/2015

21. The Proposed Development is designed to be open for public enjoyment of the spaces by the harbour. The area near the disused battery and adjacent magazine structures will be publicly accessible anytime day and night for interpretation of history, as the chain fence on the western boundary of the site near the disused battery will be pulled back from the site boundary. Similarly, the Proposed Development is suggested to be open to the general public when the campus is open and classes are in session. Parts of the Proposed Development, such as the heritage interpretive center, would also be open to the public at designated times (to be decided) and by appointment.

### Public Enjoyment

22. In addition to communal gathering spaces, i.e. the Heritage Courtyard, Grand Plaza and View Terrace, the area near the disused battery and adjacent magazine structure of the Proposed Development will also be accessible and open for the public's interpretation of history and social interaction without any time restrictions. A heritage interpretive center will also allow the public to further appreciate the history of the ex-VRDC as part of Hong Kong collective memory.

### Landscaping

23. With reference to **Annex C**, the Proposed Development will maximize greening opportunities. The unique design with elevated structure and organic form allows for the preservation of large trees in-situ, including one mature tree at the View Terrace on the western boundary which will act as a focal point. Green coverage is proposed to be at 20% to allow the Proposed Development to be compatible with its surroundings and to retain the character of the surrounding area as a low density natural environment by the water.

### Physical Linkage

24. Vehicular access to and from the Proposed Development is mainly confined to the roundabout pick up / drop off area just east of the Grand Plaza. An additional servicing access for loading / unloading, refuse collection and EVA purposes is proposed at the northern end of the ex-VRDC, just north of Block A. Pedestrian access to the View Terrace right by the water can be made through the renovated Heritage Courtyard and through the roundabout and Grand Plaza without restriction. This flow will be on the same at-grade elevation, providing an ease of access to the waterfront areas.

### Harbourfront Management

25. All areas within the ex-VRDC will be managed and maintained at the

# **Task Force on Harbourfront Developments on Hong Kong Island**

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TFHK/03/2015

University's expense.

## **VIEWS SOUGHT**

26. Members' support on the above Proposed Development is sought.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- Annex A** - Architectural Drawings
- Annex B** - Technical Schedule
- Annex C** - Overall Conceptual Landscape Proposal
- Annex D** - Conceptual 3D rendering images

**The University of Chicago Foundation in Hong Kong Limited  
February 2015**





























Annex B – Technical Schedule (calculations based only on the S16 Application Site Boundary)

	<b>Proposed Development*</b>		<b>Permitted Under OZP</b>
<b>S16 Application Site Area</b>	6,157m <sup>2</sup>  (Area of Potential Future Land Grant area is 6,640m <sup>2</sup> , which includes but not limited to the S16 Application Site, and surrounding “GB” areas)		
<b>Building Height</b>	3 storeys		4 storeys (maximum)
<b>Proposed GFA ***</b>	Without building projections*	With building projections*	4,617.75m <sup>2</sup> (0.75PR)
<b>New Structures</b>	4,850 m <sup>2</sup> (4,701m <sup>2</sup> usable by University)	5,336 m <sup>2</sup>	
<b>Heritage Structures</b>	4,001 m <sup>2</sup>	4,365 m <sup>2</sup>	
	849 m <sup>2</sup> (700m <sup>2</sup> re-used for University)	971 m <sup>2</sup>	
<b>Plot Ratio</b>	Without building projections*	With building projections*	0.75 (max.)
<b>New Structures</b>	0.79 (0.76 usable by University)	0.87	
<b>Heritage Structures</b>	0.65	0.71	
	0.14 (0.11 re-used for University)	0.16	
<b>Site Coverage *****</b>	Without building projections***	With building projections***	25% (max.)
<b>New Structures</b>	42.7% 2,628m <sup>2</sup> (33.6% / 2,091m <sup>2</sup> usable by University, excluding drop-off/ parking / plant rooms)	46.4% 2,858m <sup>2</sup>	
	34.3% 2,113m <sup>2</sup>	36.8% 2,268m <sup>2</sup>	
<b>Heritage Structures</b>	SC overlapped with heritage structures ignored here	SC overlapped with heritage structures is ignored here	
	8.4% 515m <sup>2</sup> (only 6.026% / 371m <sup>2</sup> reused for University)	9.6% 590m <sup>2</sup>	

**NOTES:**

\* For **PR** calculation, "**building projections**" mean the following:

Existing projections	a) linkbridge across Block A & B Annex – 5m <sup>2</sup> b) horizontal fins along perimeters of Block A, B & B Annex – 117m <sup>2</sup>
New Built projections	a) sunscreen - 221m <sup>2</sup> b) catwalk at LG - 54m <sup>2</sup> c) covered outdoor deck at LG – 89m <sup>2</sup>

\*\* For **PR** calculation, the following areas are **excluded** with assumption of GFA concession:

a) Covered landscape deck at G/F - 276 m <sup>2</sup> b) Entrance canopy - 41m <sup>2</sup> c) Covered Block B roof area -74m <sup>2</sup> d) Essential and non-essential plant rooms - 483m <sup>2</sup> (subject to detailed layout)
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\*\*\* For **SC** calculation, "**building projections**" mean the following:

Existing projections	a) linkbridge across Block A & B Annex b) horizontal fins along perimeters of Block A, B & B Annex
New Built projections	a) sunscreen b) catwalk c) entrance canopy (area overlapped with a) & b) are excluded)

\*\*\*\* For **SC** calculation, the following areas are **excluded**:

a) Annex magazine structure adjacent to the battery is included, but not the disused battery as it is not as roofed structure.
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Annex D - Conceptual 3D rendering images



