

Task Force on Harbourfront Developments in Kowloon, Tsuen Wan and Kwai Tsing

For discussion
on 16 May 2013

TFK/06/2013

Renovation of the Hong Kong Museum of Art

I. PURPOSE

This paper seeks Members' comments on and support for the renovation plan for the Hong Kong Museum of Art (HKMA), which forms part of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD)'s strategic plan to re-energize its cultural facilities at the waterfront of Tsim Sha Tsui (TST).

II. BACKGROUND

2. Members were informed at the Task Force meeting on 22 January 2013 vide Paper TFK/04/2013 that LCSD was mapping out short-term and long-term plans to improve and upgrade the major facilities in the Hong Kong Cultural Centre Complex (HKCCC) by phases. With Members' support, works to convert the western part of the Salisbury Garden into an art square has started and are scheduled for completion in early 2014. Meanwhile, LCSD is in active discussions with New World Development (NWD) on the renovation of the eastern part of the Salisbury Garden and the Avenue of Stars. For the renovation of the HKMA, a briefing session was arranged during Members' walking trip to TST waterfront on 13 March 2013.

III. THE ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN OF HKMA

3. Founded in 1962 at the City Hall, Central, the HKMA was re-provisioned in 1991 to her existing site at 10 Salisbury Road, TST. It is a major municipal museum of visual art with the mission of collecting and promoting Hong Kong art, and bringing in world-class art exhibitions from all parts of the world for public appreciation. The museum is a four-storey building with a basement and has a gross area of 20,829 square meters with seven galleries providing a total exhibition area of around 7,000 square meters and ancillary facilities. The museum pursues a dynamic and balanced mix of exhibitions covering Hong Kong art, Chinese art, Asian art and Western art, ranging from classical to contemporary, for the enjoyment of the public.

4. The HKMA is a key component of the HKCCC and adopts the same uniform color scheme and design as other venues there. The museum is composed of three wings in different heights and is covered

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with patterned solid tiles. The main entrance is located at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre (HKCC) Piazza facing the Space Museum, complemented by a triangular spiral staircase facing the HKCC and another spiral staircase at the harbourfront.

5. The three wings of the museum, namely the East, the Central and the West wings, have two height restrictions as imposed by the outline zoning plan. The height limit for the podium level on the West wing is 15 meters above Principal Datum (mPD), to ensure that the building bulk will not obstruct the airflow along the designated air ventilation corridor at that location. As for the rest of building, the height limit is 30 mPD.

6. The museum has the Victoria Harbour as its backdrop with a landscaped garden at its forecourt. The current architecture was designed to fulfill the functional requirements of the building, i.e. to provide maximum wall space for the exhibitions and ancillary facilities. There are seven galleries, ranging from approximately 313 square meters to 1,136 square meters, located mainly on the West and East wings. The existing building is bounded by thick solid concrete walls without visual contact with the harbour or the piazza outside. The clear headroom of these galleries varies from 3.5 meters to 4.5 meters high. By museum standard, the headroom is only considered as marginally acceptable as contemporary artwork is usually space hungry and requires a very high ceiling. The Central wing is the museum's main circulation space with escalators serving each floor. The windows facing the harbour side at the Central wing provides a view for visitors to enjoy the waterfront at the museum.

7. The whole of the East wing was skewed at an angle towards the piazza, to make way for a pre-existing 24-meter high ventilation shaft connecting to the MTRC tunnels at 12 meters below ground. Viewing from Nathan Road, a narrow viewing corridor of the harbor can be found between the public toilet block in Salisbury Garden and the museum.

8. Moreover, the whole of the East wing is a massive cantilevered structure, allowing the MTRC tunnels to run through underneath it. Consequently, a 1-meter thick, 4.5-meter high "wall beam" running full length on the ground floor of the Central wing, supporting the transferred beams, cantilevered from the East wing above. Because of this thick wall, no large opening is allowed and this explains why there is a solid façade on ground floor facing the harbour side. Consequently, the museum seems to have turned its back on the waterfront and forms a narrow passageway in between the harbour,

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where no activity can be held to attract or engage the public.

IV. THE NEED FOR RENOVATION AND EXPANSION

Inadequacies and public aspirations

9. After 20 years of intensive usage, the museum facilities are aging and cannot meet the demands of HKMA both in terms of the number and the type of exhibitions to be held. In particular, the current gallery spatial provision with its relatively low ceiling has limited the range of artworks to be displayed (e.g. large scale contemporary artworks), as well as the visitor experience. To meet the increasing number of thematic exhibitions held at the museum, permanent galleries are often used to stage temporary exhibitions and thus undermined her mission to promote Hong Kong art and showcase its collections. The attendance of HKMA has increased 1.76 times in the past 13 years, from 276,046 in 2000-2001 to 763,210 in 2012-2013, revealing a growing usage rate of her facilities and its success in attracting visual art visitors.

10. As the HKMA and other venues in the HKCCC adopt a uniformed design and colour scheme, the museum architecture is not spectacular aesthetically and does not stand out as a cultural landmark at the TST waterfront. Some of the facilities, such as the entrance lobby, café and bookshop, are considered not sufficiently user-friendly or easily accessible. In recent years, there are increasing calls from the art community and the public to uplift the outlook of the museum, increase exhibition spaces, re-instate the permanent gallery on Hong Kong art, showcase the best of her collections, and provide quality and more user-friendly facilities and services such as a signature café and bookshop.

11. In need for more space to stage exhibitions and to improve visitor facilities, the museum has explored several options for the expansion:-

(a) Relocation

The opportunity is extremely slim to find an alternative site in the TST area. It will not be conducive to audience building if HKMA is relocated to the less prominent areas where new land may be available.

(b) Demolish and rebuild the museum on the same site

Due to the existence of the MTRC cooling mains being built

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around the existing museum, these underground pipes have limited the footprint of the new building. Moreover, the total cost for re-provisioning the facilities up to museum standards would be much higher than a renovation project.

(c) Expansion within the existing building fabric

Due to the restriction of the structural framework of the existing museum as well as the existence of the considerable underground utilities including MTRC tunnel, etc., it is not possible to increase the gallery space / storage area within the existing building fabric.

(d) Additional floor on roof top

The only option is therefore to provide the additional gallery space and its supporting facilities by adding a floor on top of the existing building and adding accommodation on the ground floor and podium level.

Policy Support

12. In February 2010, the Panel on Home Affairs of the LegCo discussed a paper on “Future Development of Museum Services” and accepted that improvements of museum services should be further considered and implemented with the advice of a Museum Advisory Panel to be appointed for each of the three streams of museums, viz. art, history and science. It was also stated in the 2010-11 Policy Address that the Government “will improve the image, facilities and services of our public museums”. The renovation plan for HKMA is in line with the policy directive.

V. THE PROPOSED RENOVATION AND EXPANSION

Aims and objectives

13. The objectives of the renovation and expansion are four fold:

- (a) To refresh the HKMA’s stand as a contemporary, dynamic and spectacular cultural landmark with iconic features at the TST waterfront;
- (b) To strengthen HKMA’s position as a leading museum of excellence in the region by upgrading her facilities to the contemporary standard and provision of new exhibition spaces for promoting Hong Kong art, showcasing her collections and

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for bringing in more world-class exhibitions to enhance the museum's position as a tourist destination;

- (c) To enhance people's enjoyment of the waterfront by enhancement of visibility, accessibility, enriching the provisions of art programmes and providing viewing spaces at the museum premises; and
- (d) To tie in with the TST waterfront revitalization scheme including the renovation of the Salisbury Garden, AoS and the HKCC, as well as to co-ordinate with the re-development plans of the adjacent areas including the schemes proposed by the NWD in a holistic approach.

Development Parameters of Renovation

14. The renovation project aims to enhance the accessibility, visibility, usage and user-friendliness of HKMA as a major facility at the waterfront by face-lifting its external walls with iconic architectural features, providing more exhibition spaces and relocating its lobby, café and bookshop to the ground floor to increase the vibrancy of the area. We will integrate this project with the TST waterfront revitalization programme which includes the renovation of the Salisbury Garden in the short term and the HKCC in the long run in a holistic manner.

15. Key parameters of the HKMA renovation project include:-
- (a) To incorporate contemporary and aesthetic features into the HKMA architecture to make it a cultural attraction on the waterfront;
 - (b) To enhance pedestrian accessibility, connectivity and visibility of HKMA as a major facility at the waterfront;
 - (c) To provide more transparent architectural features, green roof garden and viewing spaces for public enjoyment;
 - (d) To provide new exhibition galleries with contemporary and sustainable design to allow vibrant programmes;
 - (e) To create a multi-purpose hall for corporate functions, events, performances and art displays to maximize utilization of the indoor public space;
 - (f) To provide new lobby entrance, glass corridor and glass cube as

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iconic features and to increase visual connectivity and interaction between indoor and outdoor areas;

- (g) To provide an alfresco-dining café to increase patronage and enhance the vibrancy of the open piazza, and a bookshop that relates to the exhibits and activities of the museum;
- (h) To improve the signage system to the facilities on the TST waterfront to improve connectivity and accessibility;
- (i) To synergize and attain harmony with neighbouring developments; and
- (j) To beautify the MTR ventilation shaft nearby as an artistic feature at the TST waterfront.

16. The renovation project will provide HKMA with two additional exhibition galleries to strengthen the museum's positioning as a leading art museum in the region in the promotion of Hong Kong art. These include a new gallery of about 1,200 square meters at the Podium at 1/F and another new gallery of about 1,100 square meters with glass facades and green garden at the rooftop. The new galleries will enable HKMA to further promote Hong Kong artists, and to bring in more world-class exhibitions for public enjoyment. Owing to site boundary restrictions and the constraints of underground utilities nearby, horizontal extension of the museum space and galleries is considered not feasible, and the only option is to build new galleries vertically on top of the Podium (clear ceiling height of around 4 meters) and the rooftop (clear ceiling height of around 5 meters).

17. The new gallery at the rooftop will stage open, dynamic and fresh art jam exhibitions of Hong Kong art through partnership with the Hong Kong artists, guest curators, art groups and other art entities to foster dialogues, collaborations and inspirational crossover to better engage the local community in art promotion. A gallery with clear ceiling height of 5 meters will better meet the needs of contemporary art exhibitions by accommodating various sizes of contemporary artworks. The gallery will be used to nurture Hong Kong artists and promote local contemporary art. The two new galleries will be enclosed in glazed walls, where natural light will be brought in. This will create new art and museum experience, as well as a pleasant connection to the city and to the water beyond.

18. With the addition of the rooftop gallery, the museum building will exceed the permissible height restriction of 30mPD as stipulated in

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the approved Tsim Sha Tsui Outline Zoning Plan (OZP) no. S/K1/26. Approval of height relaxation to 37.5mPD from Town Planning Board (TPB) under Section 16 of Town Planning Ordinance will be sought subject to the support of the Task Force.

19. Owing to structural constraints of the museum building and the limited width of the promenade and related utilities, the provision of a new glass cube and glass corridor, the new entrance lobby and staircases could only be realized at the existing front entrance of the museum instead of at the waterfront. With the provision of the new lobby, viewing deck, the glass facades of the two new galleries and the beautification of the MTR ventilation shaft, the renovation will turn the museum into a more dynamic, vibrant, transparent and attractive destination. Together with the new art square in Salisbury Garden, the HKMA will be refreshed into a prominent cultural landmark at the waterfront with contemporary outlook and enhanced visibility and connectivity.

20. The original Gross Floor Area (GFA) of the museum is approximately 20,829 square meters. With the proposed extension, the GFA will be increased to 23,625 square meters. The plot ratio will be increased from 3.77 to 4.40.

Landscape

21. The project team is committed to the greening initiatives. It is proposed that a roof garden will be provided on the same floor of the extended roof gallery. The roof garden will provide visual enhancement to the residents of the neighbourhood hotels and office blocks.

Air Ventilation

22. For the wind performance of the TST area, as mentioned in the TST Expert Evaluation (EE) prepared by Planning Department, there are no particular air ventilation issues at the coastal area where the project site is located. However, the coastal area is important to air ventilation of inner portion of TST which is located north of coastal area by providing air ventilation to the southern areas of inner portion of TST. As the proposed renovation is located within the existing building, it is considered that there will not be any impact on the two major air paths at Salisbury Garden identified in TST EE, and will not significantly affect the air ventilation to the southern areas of inner portion of TST.

23. The new height of the HKMA after renovation is about 33.7

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meters above ground while the width between the HKMA to the Inter-Continental Hong Kong Hotel opposite to of the Salisbury Garden is 75 meters. The Height /Width ratio is 1:2.2 which is considered to be sufficient. It is considered that the air path potential at Salisbury Garden as well as along the Nathan Road will not be significantly affected and will remain to be acceptable. Furthermore, the proposed stepping design will further minimize the potential blockage of the sea breeze from south-east to south-west to the pedestrian level along the Salisbury Road and Nathan Road. The proposed renovation plan will not have adverse air ventilation impact to the surroundings, nor to the inner portion of TST area north of the proposed renovation. Design of the proposed renovation scheme has taken the surrounding buildings height as well as the wind performance of the TST area into account.

24. The design perspectives and artist impression on the renovation of HKMA are at the **Annex**.

VI. ADHEREING TO HARBOUR PLANNING PRINICIPLES (HPP)

25. As the museum is a major cultural facility at the waterfront, we have taken into account the Harbour Planning Principles (HPP) when developing the parameter of the renovation¹:

(a) HPP 1 - Preserving Victoria Harbour

The project will not involve any reclamation. It will not only preserve but will also enrich the harbourfront and its cultural ambience, thereby bringing out its value as an important asset of our city.

(b) HPP 2 - Stakeholder Engagement

Public engagement is being conducted to ensure a transparent and inclusive decision-making and building process. We have already consulted the Art Museum Advisory Panel and the District Facilities Management Committee of the Yau Tsim Mong District Council on the conceptual layout of the proposed project on 22 February and 15 March 2013 respectively and had obtained their support. A series of consultations with the Museum Expert Advisors, stake-holders and members of the

¹ The eight principles are on preserving Victoria Harbour, stakeholder engagement, sustainable development, integrated planning, proactive harbour enhancement, vibrant harbour, accessible harbour and public enjoyment

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art community have been conducted from late April to early May. They supported the project and their views will be incorporated in the detailed design as deemed appropriate.

(c) HPP3 - Sustainable Development

The renovated museum with new provisions of galleries and facilities as well as connection with adjacent sites would maintain sustainable development, balance and cater for the economical (as tourist attraction), social (arts and cultural development) and environmental (no adverse impact on air ventilation and visual quality) needs of all sectors of the present generation, without compromising the needs of future generations.

(d) HPP4 - Integrated Planning

Both Harbour Planning Guidelines and Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines suggest that, in order to promote vibrancy and diversity, sites along the harbourfront should be reserved for cultural, tourism-related, recreational and retail activities.

The proposed renovation and expansion of HKMA will create more floor area to promote art and culture, the uses of which tally with the HPP. With the ultimate target to re-energize the HKCCC, the renovated museum will be part of the overall strategic plan and kick start the process of re-energizing the TST waterfront and the face-lifting of the HKCCC.

(e) HPP5 - Proactive Harbour Enhancement

The proposed renovation proposes to add iconic features and architectural interventions, such as face-lifting facades, illuminated glass structures of the HKMA building to make it stand out in the vicinity and project a unique and iconic image to enhance the harbourfront experience along the Harbour. It is also meant to become a symbol of urban design excellence in Hong Kong.

The 15m-maximum building height restriction at the southern portion is maintained so that visual permeability at the waterfront will not be affected. A varying building height profile with appropriate scale and façade treatment can also be created along the harbourfront to avoid creating an

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impermeable “wall” along harbourfront.

Beautification of the MTRC ventilation building structure will further improve the overall image of our harbour.

In a wider context, the proposed low-rise development will have a building height of about 37.5mPD, which is much lower than the buildings located inland, such as The Peninsula Hotel and Sheraton Hong Kong Hotel. A stepping height profile descending towards the Harbour will be maintained and yet will be given an enhanced outlook with the new glass structure of the rooftop gallery, which will become a unique feature among the waterfront architectural cluster.

(f) HPP 6 - Vibrant Harbour

In accordance with the Harbour Planning Guidelines, the proposed development will increase more cultural and leisure facilities to meet the aspirations of community and promoting Hong Kong as a world-class city. The renewed programming with the addition of gallery spaces will allow a greater diversity of exhibition and art events that will bring vibrancy to the area. Also, the enhanced positioning of the museum on Hong Kong art and the re-instatement of the permanent gallery on Hong Kong art made possible by the renovation will make the museum an important symbol of local cultural identity, a destination for both local and overseas visitors.

Apart from the museum uses, the renovation will further extend to the open space which will become an art forecourt for better visual synergy between the museum and its environs. It will also facilitate crossover programming to link up the different spaces. With the creation of the Art Square at Salisbury Garden, this will provide an art linkage from indoors to outdoors all the way to the harbourfront, enhancing the open space around the museum area which is now rather quiet and dead. Also the relocation of the café and the bookshop to the ground floor and to the east side of the museum near HKCC will help create vibrancy for the piazza area.

(g) HPP 7 - Accessible Harbour

The proposed renovation and expansion of HKMA will link up the busy commercial spine of Nathan Road via the renovated Salisbury Garden and the museum to the harbourfront to

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enhance user-friendliness and visitor flow of the public areas.

Currently, the exterior connection to the harbour at the museum is only served by a spiral staircase which has poor signage and legibility near the MTR ventilation shaft. In the proposed renovation, the balcony will be widened and the spiral staircase linking the balcony and the harbourfront promenade will be demolished to be replaced by wide staircases leading pedestrian at the promenade to the museum so that pedestrian can better utilise the balcony and enjoy a much better view of the Harbour.

(h) HPP 8 - Public Enjoyment

The proposed renovation and expansion of HKMA will be conducive to both the museum's provide hardware and software development for multi-dimensional public enjoyment.

On ground level, there will be easy (visual and physical) linkage from the commercial spine of Nathan Road to the harbour through the art forecourt and the museum café.

On upper level, the public can easily access the balcony of HKMA to enjoy the harbour view. Visitors inside the museum can also admire the harbour from the museum with the new glass-structured gallery. Also, the new rooftop gallery will provide an open area where the public can look out to the harbour, which will give a unique viewing experience not available in the neighbouring buildings.

The visitor experience at the harbourfront will also be enriched by the interesting architectural intervention and features at the façade of HKMA which will stand out the building to become an icon at the harbourfront. Meanwhile, the improved outlook of the MTRC ventilation building will give added value to the harbour as a spectacular artistic feature.

VII. THE WAY FORWARD

26. The Architectural Services Department (ArchSD) has completed the Technical Feasibility Study of the renovation project and come up with a schematic design. Upon completion of consultations and with the support from the Yau Tsim Mong District Council, the Harbourfront Commission, stakeholders and members of the art community, the

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ArchSD will finalize detailed design of the renovation for submission to different authorities for upgrading in the Capital Works Programme and seek funding from the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council for the works. We will also pioneer this project and co-ordinate with the long-term strategic plans to re-energize the HKCCC and with the revitalization scheme of the harbourfront with stake-holders such as the NWD. During the renovation period, the HKMA will be completely closed for 3 years, but will continue its business including exhibitions and education programmes at the Art Square at Salisbury Garden, other LCSD museums and venues in partnership with Non-Government Offices to maintain its presence and services to the public.

VIII. ADVICE SOUGHT

27. Members are invited to comment on the renovation plan of HKMA and the planning submission to the TPB for height relaxation for the provision of the rooftop gallery.

**Leisure and Cultural Services Department
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