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By Email & By Post

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Dear Mr Lam

Public Engagement on Reassembly of Queen's Pier

Thank you for joining the informal sharing session regarding the public engagement on reassembly of Queen's Pier on 7 March 2016.

The Institute is pleased to deliver our views on the captioned. Enclosed please find our written submission for your consideration.

Yours sincerely

Vincent Ng *JP FHKIA RA*
President

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1. Written Submission
2. HKIA Public Statement on the Issue of Queen's Pier and Edinburgh Place (January 2007)



Written Submission on Public Engagement on Reassembly of Queen's Pier

The Hong Kong Institute of Architects (HKIA) has been a vanguard in the betterment of the built environment in Hong Kong. It is our belief that good urban spaces come not only in quality hardware but must also foster cultural-historical values to register the identity for the people of Hong Kong.

On the issue of the current consultation on the re-assembly of Queen's Pier, The HKIA would like to offer our views as follows:-

1. In a public statement given in January 2007 (copy attached for easy reference) on Queen's Pier, the HKIA had already firmly stated our stance and recommendation for in-situ preservation in accordance with the prevailing international conservation principle/ approach. We reckon this is **the best practice** for conserving built artefacts of significant historical and cultural values, namely, Queen's Pier being an inseparable part of Edinburgh Place and City Hall, which together with the Memorial Garden of City Hall and the Rostrum in Edinburgh Place, represents an iconic public face of the former colonial history of Hong Kong.
2. Following a subsequent public consultation, the Government concluded that majority of the consulted parties had favoured the dismantling, and the relocation of Queen's Pier to Piers No.9 and 10, as part of the Central-Wanchai waterfront regeneration plan. Although this was not the usual best practice for conservation, the HKIA nonetheless accepted, and honoured, such outcome solely based on the fact that the consultation was a duly conducted democratic process with public endorsement. **This was the choice of Hong Kong people. This was a commitment made by the Hong Kong Government to its people.**
3. In February 2016, the Government put forth three options on the relocated Queen's Pier for public consultation. It was subsequent revealed through the media that the estimated construction cost for the relocation was around HK\$300 million which included marine works, reconstructing the seawall and provision of landing steps.
4. The HKIA believes that, given the public consultation of 2007 was claimed to be representative of the wish of the majority of the consulted parties, it would be sensible and logical to assume that the consenting parties must have also considered the cost aspect of the proposal before arriving at a conclusion, since the overlooking of such would have been politically unthinkable for a diligent public administration.
5. As such, the HKIA reckons that the cost aspect of the relocation of the Queen's Pier should not be a "re-opened" discussion under the current consultation, or the Government would risk admitting a spectacular oversight and failure in its administration.
6. The HKIA would therefore concentrate on giving our comments on the technical aspects of the current three options as being put forward by the Government, i.e., Queen's Pier by the Piers No.9 and 10:-



Written Submission on Public Engagement on Reassembly of Queen's Pier (continued)

A. Conservation

- i. One of the objectives of the reassembly of Queen's Pier is maintaining its public pier function. The HKIA considers the current pier relocation arrangement, sandwiched between Central Pier No.9 and 10, to be ineffective in providing more "useable" berths and could not meaningfully revive the function of Queen's Pier as a public pier.
- ii. All sides of the Pier should not be blocked by other buildings or structures to keep its original setting as far as possible and to reduce visual impact
- iii. The landscape design of the surrounding and the altered Edinburgh Place, which is not reflected in the current proposal, should be an essential and inseparable issue to be considered. Interpretation of the original setting and location of Queen's Pier by means of landscape design and other commemorating structures in both the current proposed Queen's Pier location and its original location is necessary to ensure that we are passing the accurate history to future generation.

B. Architectural Design

- i. The HKIA considers it crucial for the transitional design around the Pier should be responsive to its surroundings and vice versa.
- ii. Since the Queen's Pier and the adjacent Piers are built in different eras and of different architectural styles and language, instead of altering the roof of Central Pier No. 9 and 10 to make them echo with Queen's Pier, it is suggested to modify the canopies of Central Pier No.9 and 10 so as to allow more unobstructed space around Queen's Pier. Moreover, the proposed additional gable walls at Central Pier No. 9 and 10 as shown in Option B may not be necessary as they may obstruct harbour view and make the sandwiched Queen's Pier even less visible from Victoria Harbour.
- iii. As Queen's Pier is no longer surrounded by the sea on three sides due to the restrictions of the Protection of the Harbour Ordinance, the Institute considers that it not necessary to reconstruct the landing steps on both sides of the Pier. In addition, the proposal of raised structures would potentially block the pedestrian flow at the two ends of the Pier. Instead of the reconstruction of landing steps on the two sides of the Pier, due consideration should be given to the design of the public spaces around the Pier, with the aid of landscape elements, such as street furniture, planting, etc., to make the spaces enjoyable and user friendly.



Written Submission on Public Engagement on Reassembly of Queen's Pier (continued)

C. Connectivity and Urban Design

- i. Apart from the conservation of the architecture of Queen's Pier, urban design and integration with the surroundings shall constitute to the success of the conservation and revitalization of Queen's Pier.
- ii. City Hall, Edinburgh Place and Queen's Pier used to be an important node in Central where social, civic and ceremonial functions take place. While the current proposals have only considered the connection of Queen's Pier with Central Piers No. 9 and 10, the HKIA considers the connectivity of the relocated Queen's Pier with City Hall, Edinburgh Place and other inland facilities should be thoroughly considered, making the area a new focal point/social node on the Central Waterfront Promenade.

D. Project Procurement

- i. As the project has tremendous public interest and is a crucial element to the urban context of the whole Central Waterfront, it should be led by personnel with architectural design background and knowledge, not by an engineer, who may not have the humanity training background to address the various concerns of the society. Moreover, an architectural design competition for generation of ideas and garner public opinions on the design should be considered.

Trusting that the above shall fully represent our stance on the issue, we stand ready to offer any assistance to the Government in bringing the re-construction of the Queen's Pier into fruition as early as possible.

**The Hong Kong Institute of Architects
May 2016**



香港建築師學會

The Hong Kong Institute of Architects

The Hong Kong Institute of Architects Public Statement on the Issue of Queen's Pier and Edinburgh Place

The Institute understands that the government is planning to demolish the existing Queen's Pier in Central to make way for the Central Bypass and related buildings and structures, as part of the current Central and Wan Chai Reclamation Scheme. The public currently calls for a critical review on this previous decision. In response, the Institute reiterates our grave concern over the possible loss of this site of historical significance and a significant component of urban design in the centre of our city. We urge the Government to seriously re-consider alternative solutions before it is too late and we further urge that the Antiquities Advisory Board again reviews this issue with the greatest urgency. Among others, the value of Queen's Pier can be seen from its own historical significance, its integration with adjacent sites and the wider heritage context in Central.

There are three vital issues that we wish to *stress as well* as give direction on the proper way forward to resolve the situation:

1. Queen's Pier is a Site of Great Historical Significance that Encapsulates the Essence of Hong Kong as a Unique City of China

Queen's Pier is the place where past governors used to arrive to hold inaugural ceremonies and also where the last governor Chris Patten and Prince Charles departed following the Handover in 1997. Such historical events not only represent a conclusion to a century and a half of colonial administration, but also brings to a full circle an aspect of the recent history of China. The irreplaceable position of Hong Kong lies in its unique history of bridging the cultures of East and West. Queen's Pier, being the site of these events, encapsulates the essence of Hong Kong as being a unique city of China and thus should be conserved in-situ to inspire the future direction of Hong Kong.

2. Queen's Pier is an Inseparable Part of Edinburgh Place and City Hall

Queen's Pier was constructed in 1961 for both public and official use. It, together with the Memorial Garden of City Hall and the Rostrum in Edinburgh Place, represents a public face of the former colonial government. Queen's Pier is purposely positioned to be aligned with the City Hall Low Block entrance to accentuate a ceremonial axis. The open structure of the Pier as seen from the harbour also acts as the gateway to the City Hall ensemble. While we acknowledge that the coastline will be changed as a result of the reclamation, we believe that the site of the Pier, Edinburgh Place and City Hall should be designated as an inseparable group, together with the provision of appropriate urban landscape design and probably water feature, to maintain the integrity of the spatial relationship and thus the significant historical meaning.

Patron: The Honourable Donald Tsang Yam-Kuen, Chief Executive, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
A Member of The International Union of Architects (UIA), Commonwealth Association of Architects (CAA) and Architects Regional Council Asia (ARCASIA)

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3. Preservation of Queen's Pier is Technically Feasible without Major Disruption to the Planned Infrastructure

We, as a professional institute, believe that the urged protection of Star Ferry Clock Tower and Queen's Pier did not at all need to be an obstruction to the ongoing Central Reclamation and the Central Bypass projects. With minor structural adaptation of the proposed tunnel and minor re-alignment of the road, the infrastructural works could incorporate the existing Queen's Pier structure as part of an enhanced public open space without major adverse contractual, financial or time implications. We strongly urge the Government to explore alternative technical solutions to achieve both the conservation and the development objectives.

We would also like to point out several wider issues raised by this current concern of Queen's Pier.

A. The Built Heritage in Central should be Valued as a Whole

Central is a particularly unique place in the world which has recorded urban development and the interaction of East and West since the first part of the 19th century, through her development from the beginnings of the City of Victoria to the contemporary CBD of a World City. Built heritage in Central that bears witness to this proud process and thus should be valued, include financial institutes, religious buildings, government buildings, civic spaces, ceremonial places, and cultural landscape. Queen's Pier / Edinburgh Place / City Hall contribute strongly to such valued heritage and thus should be protected.

B. Criteria for Determination of Heritage Value should not be Limited to Age Alone

The current system of declaring monuments for protection under the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance limits the scope of protection to pre-war monuments. However, international legal frameworks for the protection of heritage sites have already expanded to modern and near-modern architecture, if they can be demonstrated to be of special value in line with the customary aspiration or traditional association of the *society concerned*. For example, the criteria for Listing in England now includes not only age, but also rarity, aesthetic merit, historical association (related to significant events important to the community), and selectivity (whether this is a good representative example of the similar type and quality that survives). If such criteria were adopted in Hong Kong, the entire City Hall complex with the adjacent Memorial Garden, extending to Edinburgh Place and Queen's Pier should be warranted for legal protection.

Similarly, clause 2.2 of the National Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Relics 1982 covers "near modern commemorate buildings associated significant historic events, ... or have important meanings, educational values or historical values." (*)

Such principle, if applied here, would clearly grant City Hall and Queen's Pier preservation status. Hence the current view of the Government that modern post-war buildings, like City Hall or Queen's Pier, do not possess a long enough history to deserve consideration for protection obviously falls short of both international and Mainland standards.



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C. Conservation should include Protection of Ensembles & Control of Urban Design in Sensitive Zones

Heritage protection policy in most places in the world is not limited to declaring individual buildings or structures in isolation as monuments, but is extended to protect ensembles or urban groups. Systems to manage development within a wider context like the designation of conservation streets or zones with special design control should be set up. The Institute strongly believes that authentic values of heritage buildings or areas include architectural and planning characteristics such as usage, density, heights, views, dispositions, routes, open space, proportions, buffer zones and street life, which can only be dealt with by control of urban design criteria with conservation of heritage characteristics in mind.

D. Heritage Conservation is an Inspiration to Future Generations through Respecting Our History

The situation now in Hong Kong can be compared to the scene in 1968 in New York when the plans to demolish Central Station to make way for commercial re-development was suddenly revealed by the owner, and the general public awakened to the fact that they have always loved this seemingly utilitarian, but actually memorable building. The public fight to save the building is best summarized by the well-known statement by Jacqueline Kennedy then:

“Is it not cruel to let our city die by degrees, stripped of all her proud monuments, until there will be nothing left of all her history and beauty to inspire our children? If they are not inspired by the past of our city, where will they find the strength to fight for her future? ... for short term gain they ignore it and tear down everything that matters. Maybe ... this is the time to take a stand, to reverse the tide, so that we won't all end up in a uniform world of steel and glass boxes.”

We believe that we are not alone in Hong Kong now who share similar sentiments about the possible demolition of Queen's Pier.

* 中华人民共和国文物保护法 第一章第二条：

在中华人民共和国境内，下列文物受国家保护：（二）与重大历史事件、革命运动或者著名人物有关的以及具有重要纪念意义、教育意义或者史料意义的近代现代重要史迹、实物、代表性建筑。