



Our ref.: Council/BLA/HCC/BC/NK/20240912

12 September 2024

Mr. Douglas SO, *BBS, JP*
Chairman of the Antiquities Advisory Board
14/F, Revenue Tower,
5 Gloucester Road,
Wan Chai, Hong Kong

By Post and Email
enquiry@aab.gov.hk

Dear Mr. Douglas SO,

**Revitalization Scheme for Block 4 of Central Police Station (Tai Kwun)
HKIA's Observations on Latest Proposal from Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC)**

The Hong Kong Institute of Architects (HKIA) notes the latest progress update of the Revitalization Scheme for Block 4 of Central Police Station (Tai Kwun) submitted by The Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC) to the Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB) and pending discussion at the AAB 206th meeting today (12 Sep 2024). After the investigations by HKJC and their expert team to explore the Recovery Works for Block 4 since 2018 and the demolition of 1/F and 2/F in June 2023-2024, the latest proposal further demolishes a part of the remaining G/F and adds a new modern roof to make the site a covered functional space.

HKIA has long advocated for historic buildings in Hong Kong to be socially usable in order to promote the public appreciation of history and architecture of Hong Kong. In conferring the Special Architectural Award (Heritage & Adaptive Re-use) in HKIA Annual Awards 2018/2019, HKIA has recognized the merit of the overall Tai Kwun design, which was its sensitive balance between the diligent preservation of the historic design and fabric, and its innovative integration of new compatible elements and new coherent facilities in interpreting the history of the place and providing a contemporary cultural and civic space to the city.

Having studied the current Block 4 proposal, HKIA urges the Development Bureau (DEVB)/Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO) to carefully consider whether the following key proposed interventions for the revitalization of Block 4 are necessary:

1. The additional demolition of a portion of G/F rooms into terraced seating to enable a larger functional performance space

Despite the arguments presented by HKJC in terms of safety, program and long-term sustainability for the need of a larger functional space, and the reinterpretation proposal to take down the brick walls of the rooms to align with the stepped terrace seating profile, the proposal is in danger of permanently reducing the declared monument into a row of single-storey arched colonnade without rooms, thus preventing understanding of the significance of the context (be it environmental, stylistic, or societal or economic) that explained the heritage values of CPS in the first place, and also destroys important spatial elements and compositions - character-defining elements that are equally if not more important than the salvaged parts of the demolished portion; and



2. The addition of an oversailing new roof structure

While the functional advantages of the roof structure are brought forward by HKJC, it is in danger of overpowering the existing heritage in terms of mass, scale and appearance, breaks the overall composition of the Central Police Station compound, and thus being in contravention of well-established conservation principles set by ICOMOS.

In light of the above, HKIA urges DEVB/AMO to withhold the permission to further demolish of the Block 4 until the proposal has been adequately refined to balance the operational needs, the impact on the heritage ensemble, and the concerns of the public. We are most ready to contribute further if HKJC and the Board feels appropriate, so that continuing innovative and well-mannered conservation design can be exercised here.

HKIA believes that a sensitive and intricate balance can be struck between the original architectural spirit of the historic ensemble and a contemporary and innovative architectural intervention. We agree that inherent defective parts of the building can be demolished because of safety and functionality, but the potential of design to allow deeper interpretation must be duly explored. We also trust that the project should continue to uphold the international standards of heritage conservation principles, which have been excellently upheld in the project up to now, and have due respect to the history and architecture of our home. We thus urge AMO to carefully consider the revitalization scheme and offer their expert guidance in achieving a world-class architectural design for the community of Hong Kong.

Yours Sincerely,

Benny CHAN Chak Bun, *CHKIA, R.A.*
President
The Hong Kong Institute of Architects