

Frequently Asked Questions on Assessment of 1,444 Buildings which May Have Heritage Value

Q1: How were the 1,444 buildings identified and assessed?

A1: A territory-wide survey on the buildings in Hong Kong mainly built before 1950 was carried out by the Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO) in 1996-2000. Some 8,800 buildings were recorded. A more in-depth survey of 1,444 buildings with higher heritage value selected from the 8,800 surveyed buildings was carried out by AMO in 2002-2004.

As recommended by Members of the Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB), an Expert Panel comprising historians and members of the Hong Kong Institute of Architects, Hong Kong Institute of Planners and Hong Kong Institution of Engineers has been formed since March 2005 to undertake an in-depth assessment of the heritage value of these buildings.

A two-tier assessment approach is adopted for the assessment of these buildings. All the buildings were first assessed at Stage 1 against six criteria, namely historical interest, architectural merit, group value, social value and local interest, authenticity and rarity. The scores of all the buildings were reviewed at Stage 2 when a comparative rating of the buildings was carried out based on three parameters, i.e. historical, typological and contextual in the Stage 2 assessment.

Q2: Have the evaluation system and the selection principles been drawn up based on international practices?

A2: The evaluation system and the selection principles for historic buildings are derived from the systems and principles adopted in overseas countries as well as the established international documents on heritage conservation, including *Venice Charter* (International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites), *Burra Charter* (The Australia ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance), and *Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China* (China ICOMOS). The actual situation of Hong Kong has also been a crucial factor taken into consideration.

Q3: How do I know details of the assessment result? What if I do not agree

to the assessment of my building?

A3: The assessment results, together with the proposed grading, have been uploaded onto the AMO website and can be viewed by the public through the link: <http://www.amo.gov.hk/en/aab.php>.

To facilitate a deeper understanding of its heritage value, it would be most appreciated if arrangement could be made to allow our experts to have access to further information on your building; for example, how the building was used, any significant events taken place inside the building, the interior design and decoration of the building etc.

Upon getting to know more supplementary information on the building, we will convey all such relevant information including your views and comments to the AAB and its Expert Panel for consideration in re-assessment of the building.

Q4: Could I know what reference materials/ information about the building have been considered by the Expert Panel in the assessment of the heritage value of the building?

A4: In the assessment of the 1,444 buildings, we have made reference to a number of archives and publications from different sources. Copies of some of these reference materials are now kept in AMO. If you wish to view them, you are welcome to visit our office at the Hong Kong Heritage Discovery Centre, Kowloon Park, Tsim Sha Tsui. Please call 2208 4428 to make an appointment for our prior arrangement.

The information considered by the Expert Panel is factual account of the heritage value of the buildings concerned. In the light of the huge volume of materials considered, we have provided extract of the information online through the website at: <http://www.amo.gov.hk/en/aab.php>.

Q5: Would the grading jeopardize my ownership of the building?

A5: You will remain the owner of the building after the grading of the building. Also, we are eager to listen to owners' views and are willing to exchange views in regard to the proposed grading.

Q6: Would the grading of my property have any implication/ restrictions on

any proposed alteration/ renovations to be conducted?

A6: The grading of the building per se will not put the building under statutory protection under the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (Cap. 53). However, the Authority will actively consider whether a building in the pool of Grade 1 buildings has reached the high threshold of “monument” for the purpose of declaration of “monument” under the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (Cap. 53), and may take action for “proposed monument” declaration under the Ordinance if the building needs immediate statutory protection (e.g. if the building is under threat of demolition or alteration/ renovation works are proposed to be carried out which may affect the heritage value of the building). Should the Authority declare the building to be a “monument” as defined in the Ordinance (e.g. by way of declaring the building to be a historical building under section 3 of the Ordinance) or a “proposed monument” as defined in the Ordinance (e.g. by way of declaring the building to be a proposed historical building under section 2A of the Ordinance), the relevant protection mechanism under the Ordinance will apply, for example, the prohibition on building/ demolition works and other works unless a permit is granted by the Authority under section 6 of the Ordinance. For a Grade 2 or Grade 3 building, demolition works or building works such as alteration/ renovation works which may affect the heritage value of the building are also not encouraged. The proposed grading is only preliminary and subject to further assessment by the AAB in the coming months. The actual preservation arrangement for any graded historic building would have to depend on such factors as the structure, condition and features of individual building, as well as the technical feasibility. Should you have any proposed alteration/ renovation to be conducted, AMO stands ready to offer technical advice on the proposals.

Q7: What measures and incentives will be undertaken by Government should I want to demolish my graded building?

A7: A number of new administrative measures and economic incentives have been undertaken by Government to conform to the heritage conservation policy.

The Authority (i.e. the Secretary for Development) would actively consider all Grade 1 buildings for possible declaration of “monuments” as defined in the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (Cap. 53). Government will likely to intervene in case the Grade 1 buildings are under demolition threat (e.g. by declaring these buildings as “proposed monuments” as defined in

the Ordinance, if necessary) in order to provide immediate protection to the buildings. If the Authority declares a building to be a “monument” as defined in the Ordinance (e.g. by way of declaring the building to be a historical building under section 3 of the Ordinance) or a “proposed monument” as defined in the Ordinance (e.g. by way of declaring the building to be a proposed historical building under section 2A of the Ordinance), the relevant protection mechanism under the Ordinance will apply, for example, the prohibition on building/ demolition works and other works unless a permit is granted by the Authority under section 6 of the Ordinance.

For Grade 2 and Grade 3 buildings, we would take the view that the buildings should be preserved in such a way which is commensurate with the merits of the buildings concerned, and priority would be given to those with higher heritage value. If a building is graded as a Grade 2 or Grade 3 building, but subsequently there is information which suggests that the building is of higher heritage value, the Antiquities Advisory Board will consider whether it should be graded as a Grade 1 building.

Government also recognises the need for economic incentives in order to encourage and facilitate private owners to preserve their graded buildings. For maintenance of privately-owned graded buildings, Government now offers assistance in the form of grant through the Financial Assistance for Maintenance Scheme. For details of the Scheme, please visit the Development Bureau’s website at <http://www.heritage.gov.hk/en/maintenance/about.htm> or approach the Commissioner for Heritage’s Office under the Bureau via:

Address: Commissioner for Heritage’s Office
Development Bureau
19/F, West Wing, Central Government Offices,
2 Tim Mei Avenue, Tamar, Hong Kong

Email: mhb_enquiry@devb.gov.hk

Phone: 3509 7342

Fax: 2189 7264

Private owners are advised to explore the possibility of “preservation-cum-development” options to incorporate their graded buildings in the future

development. Government is willing to discuss with private owners to derive options for preservation and possible economic incentives that are commensurate with the heritage value of the graded buildings.

Q8: Whether clear guidelines could be provided to owners on what could and what could not be demolished for each level of graded buildings?

A8: Generally speaking, demolition of a graded building is not encouraged. We recognise that if some form of standard guidelines could be produced, it could facilitate the owners and their architects in considering whether and how to preserve and revitalise their graded buildings. However, given the wide diversity in the type of buildings and the architectural features in them, it would be difficult to provide “one-size-fits-all” guidelines that can cover all circumstances. We will examine to see how to strike a balance on a case-by-case basis.

- END -

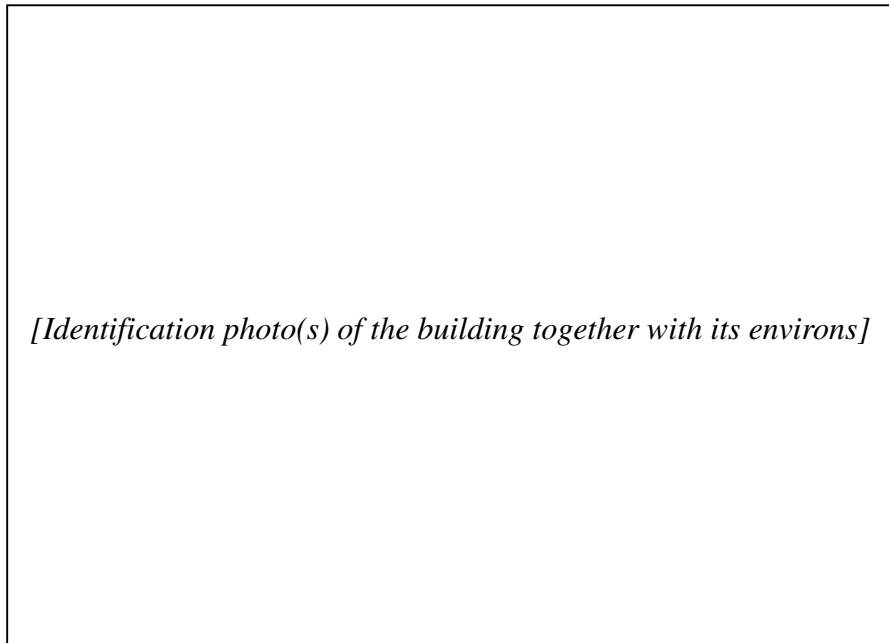
**Antiquities and Monuments Office
Leisure and Cultural Services Department**

HISTORIC BUILDING ASSESSMENT FORM

(as at 29 December 2005)

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

File Reference : _____
Name of Building(s) : _____
Address : _____
Grading : _____
Year of Construction : _____
Architectural Style : _____
Type (Original Function) : _____
Owner(s) : _____
Current Occupant(s) : _____
Current Use : _____
Architect(s) : _____
Zoning (Plan No.) : _____
Map Reference : _____
Site Area : _____
Building Area : _____
Remarks : _____



Date taken : _____
Source : _____

B. ASSESSMENT

Criterion	Range of Score				Score Awarded
	4	3	2	0 or 1	
<i>1. Historical Interest</i>					
(a) Associated with historical event(s), phase(s) or activity(ies)	Associated with extremely significant event(s) at territory/ national level	Only associated with very significant event(s) at district/ regional level	Only associated with significant event(s) of local community	Little or no association	
(b) Associated with historic figure(s)	Associated with historic figure(s) at territory/ national level	Associated with historic figure(s) at district/ regional level	Associated with historic figure(s) of local community	Little or no association	
(c) Importance in the historical development of Hong Kong	Important at territory level	Only important at district/ regional level	Only important to local community	Little importance	
(d) Age of the building	1899 or earlier	1900-1919	1920-1939	1940-1970	
<i>2. Architectural Merit</i>					
(a) Style - as an example of an architectural style	Excellent example	Very good example	Good example	Ordinary example	
(b) Function - as an example of a building type	Excellent example	Very good example	Good example	Ordinary example	

Criterion	Range of Score				Score Awarded
	4	3	2	0 or 1	
(c) Construction - design, decoration, construction materials, technology and craftsmanship	Excellent construction	Very good construction	Good construction	Ordinary construction	
(d) Aesthetic Value - The building's external appearance contributes to visual quality of its vicinity	Very high aesthetic value	High aesthetic value	Ordinary aesthetic value	Little aesthetic value	
3. Group Value	4	3	2	0 or 1	
(a) Importance in a building cluster of harmonious architectural design and style of Hong Kong or an integral component of an historical complex	Very Important	Important	Some importance	Little or no importance	
(b) Importance in a building cluster showing common cultural value(s) or historical development of Hong Kong	Important to a region	Only important to a district	Only important to a place	Little or no importance to an area	

Criterion	Range of Score				Score Awarded
	4	3	2	0 or 1	
4. Social Value and Local Interest					
(a) Importance as a symbolic or visual landmark recognized by the community	Important at territory level	Important at district/ regional level	Only important to the people of a place	Only important at individual's level	
(b) Importance in depicting "cultural identity" and/ or perpetuating "collective memory" of the community	Important at territory level	Important at district/ regional level	Only important to the people of a place	Only important at individual's level	
5. Authenticity					
(a) Alterations to the building that adversely affect/ enhance its historical significance and architectural integrity	No notable alterations OR Alteration(s)/ change(s) associated with a historic figure/ event that enhanced its heritage/cultural significance or/ and architectural value	Only superficially altered, little impact on overall integrity	Moderately altered, but the original design still discernible	Considerably altered to detract greatly from its integrity	
(b) Modification to the cultural setting and the associated cultural landscapes	Its cultural setting well preserved OR Compatible modification that enhanced the overall ambience/ environment	Only superficially modified, little impact on overall environment	Moderately modified, but the original environment still discernible	Considerably modified to detract greatly from its environment	

Criterion	Range of Score				Score Awarded
6. <i>Rarity</i>	10-12	7-9	4-6	0-3	
Being rare due to the a) historical interest; and/or b) architectural merit; and/or c) group value; and/or d) social value & local interest; and/or e) authenticity of the building (refer to Explanatory Notes, section 3.6)	Very rare	Rare	Moderately rare	Least or not rare	
7. Other Remarks					
Overall Score (Possible Maximum: 68)					

C: GENERAL REMARKS

Sustainability		Range of Grading			Remarks
(i)	<i>Compatibility to current use</i>	<u>High</u>	<u>Medium</u>	<u>Low</u>	
(ii)	<i>Adaptability to adaptive re-use</i>	<u>High</u>	<u>Medium</u>	<u>Low</u>	
(iii)	<i>Others (please specify)</i>				

Assessed by : _____
 (Name: _____)

Date of assessment : _____

Note:

Locally, nationally and internationally, ideas about what constitutes heritage and the relative significance of heritage are subject to change in the light of further discoveries, scholarly re-evaluation, scarcity value, and other factors. The assessments arrived at will therefore be subject to scrutiny and reappraisal from time to time.

**Explanatory Notes of
Historic Building Assessment Form**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The evaluation system and the selection principles for historic buildings (the term “historic buildings” is used to also include historic structures and the immediate adjoining landscape of the buildings in these Explanatory Notes) are derived from the systems and principles adopted in overseas countries as well as the established international documents on heritage conservation, including *Venice Charter* (International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites), *Burra Charter* (The Australia ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance), and *Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China* (China ICOMOS).
- 1.2 In drawing up the Assessment Form, the actual situation of Hong Kong has been a crucial factor taken into consideration.

2. Assessment

- 2.1 This assessment is based on a holistic approach pertaining to the relationship between Hong Kong’s historical development and its built heritage.
- 2.2 Due to increasing number of buildings erected and the larger number that have survived, the selection is to a large extent a comparative exercise. This assessment is to identify the best or key exemplars for each of a range of building types. Under this approach, buildings in Hong Kong are classified and assessed according to their original functions and types, namely ancestral hall, Chinese temple, walled village, village house, residence, shophouse, Western military structures, Chinese military structures, law court/ judiciary building, police station, prison, fire station, government office, social welfare institution, medical/ sanitary building, study hall, village school, school by voluntary association, government school, private school, church/ chapel, ethnic religious building, cemetery/ grave, recreation club, cultural/ entertainment venue, market town/ building, custom station, transport facilities, lighthouse, waterworks, communication facilities, bridge, streetscape, commercial building, industrial building, commemorative stone/ plaque/ inscriptions and others.
- 2.3 This assessment form makes reference to the rating method developed by Harold Kalman in the 1970s and with some modification for adapting to the local situations. Each building is assessed against a set of criteria as item 3 below. For each item of the criteria, four ratings are assigned, depending on its significance. For example, significance of some criteria (like historic interest, rarity, landmark value, etc.) can be rated in four different levels as below:

- (a) Only important to an area (e.g. a street or a village);
- (b) Community/ place [e.g. a clan or a small *heung* (鄉)];
- (c) District/ region [e.g. Fanling area or a large *heung yeuk* (rural alliance 鄉約 like Alliance of North Sai Kung 西貢北約)]
- (d) Territory-wide (HKSAR) or national level.

2.4 The grades can be translated into numbers and therefore the building(s) to be assessed can receive a numerical score for ranking from 1 (low importance) to 4 (highest importance) if required. In order to achieve a relative balance between each criteria, the rarity of the building will be rated as 0-3, 4-6, 7-9 and 10-12.

3. CRITERIA

3.1 Historic Interest

- 3.1.1 Close historical association with significant event(s) in the historical and cultural development of Hong Kong.
- 3.1.2 This refers to the association of a building with historic figure(s), being real person(s) important for the development of Hong Kong. For buildings like Chinese temples dedicated to mythical figures, e.g. Hau Wong and Kwan Tai, their association with such mythical figures should be assessed within the framework of the “Social Value and Local Interest” of the buildings (See section 3.4).
- 3.1.3 This refers to the quality of a building which illustrates important aspects of the social, economic, cultural or military history of Hong Kong.
- 3.1.4 The building should bear a testimony to a cultural tradition, a culture or a phenomenon (or phenomena) which is living or which has disappeared.
- 3.1.5 Building age should be above 30 years and the building should have been built in or prior to 1970, unless it is of exceptional quality and significance.

3.2 Architectural Merit

- 3.2.1 This refers to the quality of a building which is of importance to the architectural development of Hong Kong.
- 3.2.2 High score should be accorded to buildings which demonstrate developments in architecture or technology, town-planning or landscape design which illustrate (a) significant stage(s) in local history.
- 3.2.3 Importance to the place for the interest of their architectural design, plan forms, decoration, craftsmanship, construction techniques (e.g. building exhibiting particular technological innovation or virtuosity) or use of materials/ fabric.
- 3.2.4 High score should be accorded to buildings exhibiting an important interchange

of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area, on developments in architecture or technology, town-planning or landscape design.

3.3 Group Value

- 3.3.1 This refers to groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of significant universal value from the point of view of history or architecture.
- 3.3.2 Significance as a group of buildings of harmonious design and style which enhance and exhibit the character or history of a streetscape, a district or a place. The external appearance of a group of buildings reflects obvious visual quality which enhances the aesthetic value of Hong Kong. (e.g. a group of shophouses at Nos. 600 to 626 Shanghai Street exhibit the modern urban streetscape of Hong Kong).
- 3.3.3 The group of buildings should demonstrate a fine example of a historical human settlement or land-use, such as walled villages, terraces or purpose-built compound, which is representative of a culture, or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible changes.
- 3.3.4 The group of buildings should bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition which is living or which has disappeared, or to an important historical development of Hong Kong. (e.g. historic aviation structures at Kai Tak Airport reflecting the aviation development of Hong Kong like Ex-RAF Station, Far East Flying School and the Old Pillbox at Diamond Hill CDA site, are located at Kwun Tong, Kln City and Wong Tai Sin districts respectively).

3.4 Social Value and Local Interest

- 3.4.1 Significance as a symbolic or visual landmark recognized by the community for symbolic, spiritual, emotional or nostalgic reasons.
- 3.4.2 Importance in depicting the “cultural identity” and perpetuating the “collective memory” of the community.
- 3.4.3 The collective memory to be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions and customs, with ideas, or with beliefs.

3.5 Authenticity

- 3.5.1 This refers to quality of buildings which have undergone little modifications and retained most of its original features, materials and character.
- 3.5.2 Alterations and additions at a later stage should not detract from the original architectural expression, including its design, material and workmanship or setting and the associated cultural landscapes.

3.5.3 Significant interactions between people and the natural environment are recognized as cultural landscapes.

3.5.4 Except for those changes or alterations that are of historical or architectural significance associated with historic event or figure, or represent a significant technological achievement.

3.6 Rarity

The comparative rarity of a building within the same building type can be assessed in accordance with the following aspects:

3.6.1 Historical Interest:

The rarity of a building can be associated with the historical interest it embodies. The stronger is the association of the building with historical event(s)/ phase(s)/ activity(ies) and/or figure(s), the more it can reflect the historical development of Hong Kong, and/ or the older it is, the higher the score will be allocated to it in terms of rarity; and/or

3.6.2 Architectural Merit:

This can also refer to buildings which represent the only or the few surviving examples of a particular type or style of architecture, building technology or fabric of Hong Kong, and are significant in exhibiting a rare or uncommon design, tradition (including traditional trades and crafts) or custom that is of exceptional interest to the community; and/or

3.6.3 Group value; and/or

3.6.4 Social value and local interest; and/or

3.6.5 Authenticity:

This includes the architectural and cultural integrity and setting of a building.

4. GENERAL REMARKS

4.1 Compatibility to Current Use

4.1.1 The compatibility of the current use of a historic building will be high if such use involves no change to the culturally significant fabric, changes which are substantially reversible, or changes which require a minimal impact.

4.1.2 Grading ranging from “High”, “Medium” to “Low” will serve to indicate the compatibility of the building to current use. Self-explanatory notes to the grading allocated or any comments can be expressed as “Remarks”.

4.2 Adaptability to Adaptive Re-use

4.2.1 Adaptation means modifying a place to suit a proposed compatible use(s).

- 4.2.2 The adaptability will be high if the adaptation will not substantially detract the building from its cultural significance.
- 4.2.3 Grading ranging from “High”, “Medium” to “Low” will serve to indicate the adaptability to adaptive re-use of a historic building. Elaborative notes to the grading allocated or any recommendations can be made under “Remarks”.

REFERENCE

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