

Highlights of Conservation Management Plan

A recognised leading firm of conservation architects and historic building consultants, Purcell Miller Tritton (PMT) has conducted a thorough study of CPS and prepared a Conservation Management Plan (CMP). A CMP is a brief appraisal of the history and development of a building or site, with an emphasis on assessing and understanding the significance of that place and includes a set of policies intended to inform the future use, maintenance and possible redevelopment of the site.

Some key points of the CMP are highlighted as follows:

General comments and recommendations

- (a) Good conservation work is often the management of change and making decisions about the least damaging way of doing things. It is recognised that there will need to be some new construction on the site. Any redevelopment or new construction on the site should respect the historic significance of the site;
- (b) The failure to find a sustainable new use will be the biggest risk to the site. The recommendations in the CMP are not about stopping change but managing it in a way that maintains the historic and cultural significance of the site;
- (c) It would be inappropriate to try and conserve the site in its entirety as a monument/museum on the history of law and order in Hong Kong. This is an interesting subject and relevant in educational terms – but the site is large and it is very difficult to see how the whole site could be put to good use in this way. The challenge is to find new uses and integrate them into the fabric of the existing buildings without diminishing the significance of the site and its buildings;
- (d) There will need to be significant alterations to some areas of the site and to some of the buildings. This will be the price for securing a long term future. Some of the buildings, the cell blocks in particular, cannot be sensibly used for other purposes without major alterations. It is proposed that one cell block (E Hall is suggested) be conserved as an exemplar but the others be allowed substantially more freedom to complete internal alterations. In other buildings, which may be of high significance in themselves, it will be appropriate to decide on the most significant areas to conserve, repair and restore, whilst accepting that some secondary areas of the same buildings may be more significantly altered;
- (e) There will be pressure to alter buildings to comply with fire regulations, provide for new mechanical and electrical services, cater for the security requirements of individual

tenants, and achieve better use of space. If the site is to have a long term future all these changes will need to be accommodated – but the changes must be managed to ensure that the significance of the site will be retained and preserved;

- (f) The character of the area surrounding the site is one of dense urban buildings with little external space and with many of the buildings being very high-rise. It is probably fair to say that little could be done by way of new buildings on adjacent sites that will have any further impact on the site itself. It is already surrounded and one is aware of the adjacent buildings both from the external spaces and when looking out of the windows of the buildings in the site. To this extent the site is no longer really vulnerable to adjacent redevelopments as ‘it has already happened’;
- (g) It will be desirable to make new pedestrian routes across the site. Such routes should respect the existing building pattern, the division of the site into discreet compounds and, as far as it is possible, the historic entrances to the site;
- (h) It will be necessary to make some new vehicle routes into the site for emergency vehicles and to facilitate servicing the site. Such routes should be as discreet as possible consistent with allowing the necessary access;

Comments on specific features

- (i) The external granite walls around the site are one of the features that define the site and contribute to its significance. They are also a major townscape feature of the site. As far as possible the walls should be retained in their current form as a clear way of marking out the previous use of the site. However, respecting this should be balanced against achieving access to the site. This should also be compatible with new public and commercial uses;
- (j) The Police Parade Ground should be preserved as an open space. It should remain free of unnecessary street furniture and should not have inappropriate activities (such as vending stalls, tables for alfresco dining, permanent stages, external screens, etc). Despite its historic use by the police this space should not be used for parking vehicles. The surfaces of the parade ground should be appropriate to its former use;
- (k) The Prison Yard should be preserved as an open space. It should remain free of unnecessary street furniture and inappropriate activities. The essential character of the space as a simple and rather bleak area should be retained to maintain the feel and significance of the prison use;
- (l) There is a smaller open space immediately south of the Magistracy notable for the granite entrance steps and the fine canopy over the French windows into the main court. This

open space is significant and should not be built in but should be preserved as a courtyard free of unnecessary clutter;

- (m) All the trees on the site are significant and should be protected from damage during any development works and should be retained;
- (n) The separation between the different compounds and the different levels of the site are all historically significant. These separating features should remain clear in any redevelopment of the site; and
- (o) F Hall, whilst being of little architectural significance, is of some social significance as the entrance and exit to the Victoria Prison for prisoners and their visitors. For this reason it may be desirable to consider keeping the exterior of the building more or less in its present form with obvious modern additions removed.

Source: HKSAR Information Services Department

History

Dating back to the beginning of Hong Kong in 1841, the Central Police Station was a consolidated location for Hong Kong's law and order, judiciary and correctional services. Some of the earliest structures built under British rule were located at this historic site. There have been subsequent extensions or alterations, reflecting social, political and operational changes over the past century and a half. Buildings of the Central Police Station can be traced back to between 1864 and 1919, and the Central Magistracy and Victoria Prison, to 1914 and 1841 respectively. Until recently, the site served as a police station, dormitory and prison, as well as both the Hong Kong Island Regional Police Headquarters and the Central District Police Headquarters.

The site comprises, in a prime urban location, the largest remaining cluster of historically significant buildings. In 1995, the Central Police Station, Central Magistracy and Victoria Prison were declared as monuments under the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance. In 2006, the Central Police Station was decommissioned and closed.

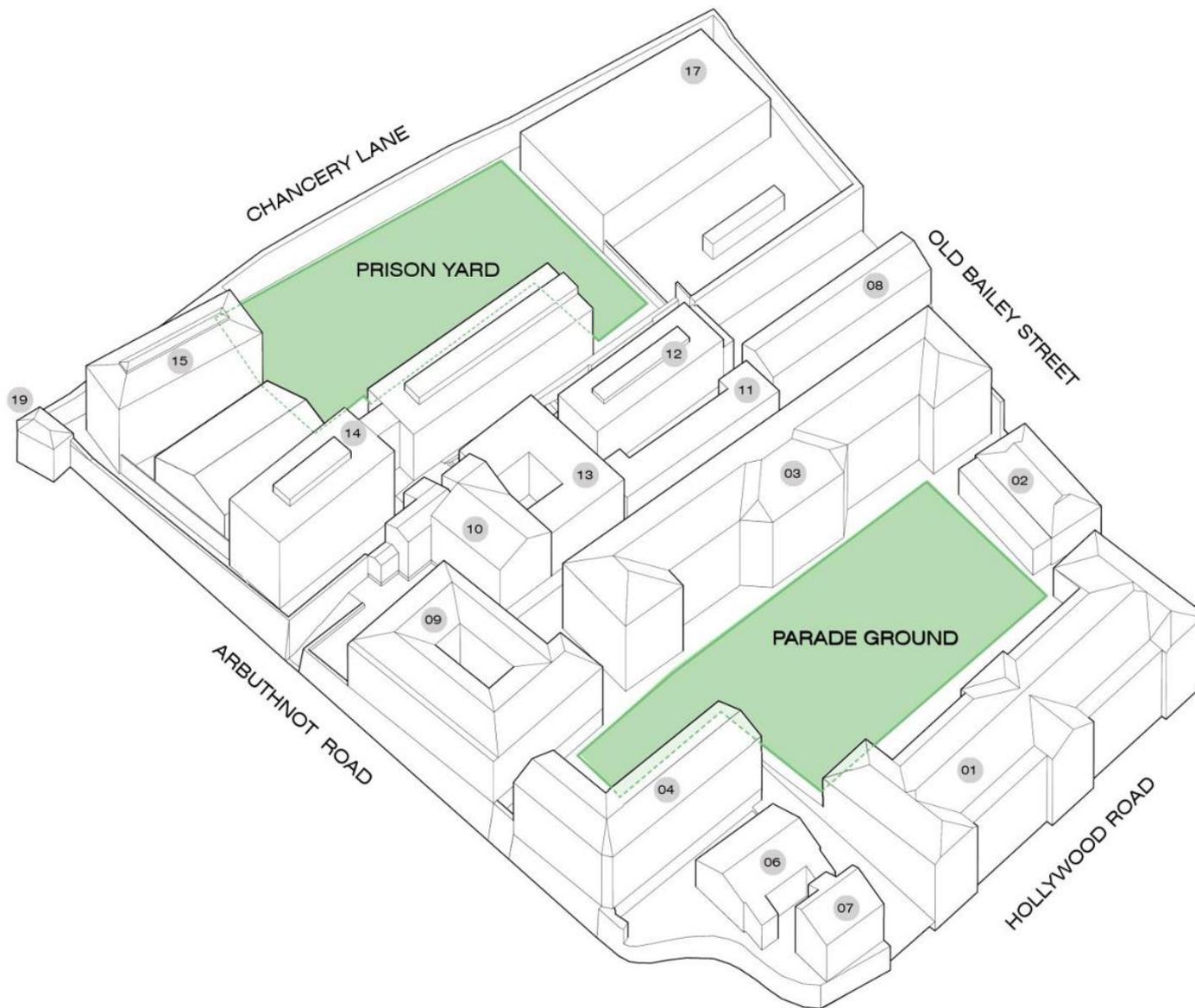
Historical details of the 16 historically significant buildings identified for conservation and revitalisation:

Building	Built	Former functions
Headquarters Block	1919	Completed in 1919 and often considered the most visible, public façade of the Central Police Station complex, this building was originally used for dormitories, offices and recreational facilities. Its interior includes a decorative central staircase and lobbies on each floor.
Armoury and Store	1925	This building is one of only a few buildings whose use during the Japanese occupation is known. Its use as a stable for Japanese mounted guards has led it to be commonly referred to as the Stable Block. In the late 20 th century, it was used as offices for the Traffic Police.
Barrack Block	1864	Providing an important physical division between the police and the prison, this block is part of a group of buildings which formed the first construction phase of the site and completed around 1864. In the late 1920s, the block housed some offices for the Criminal Investigation Department, and by 1947 it was housing a Radio Control Room.
Dormitory Blocks A and B	1864	These buildings are some of the earliest on the site, built in the same phase as the Barrack Block, and contain the only known evidence aside from the retaining walls of the earliest prison compound – granite features which would have formed part of the Guard Houses of 1856. The last known use was for various Police staff spaces, including a briefing room, changing room, mess room and storage.
Dormitory Block C	1900s	This building forms a group with Dormitory Block D, which is evidence of the constant expansion of police

		accommodation. There is substantial survival of original fabric, including staircases, joinery and plaster details. Its last known use was as a Traffic Police Dormitory.
Dormitory Block D	1900s	This building forms a group with Dormitory Block C, which is evidence of the constant expansion of police accommodation. There is substantial survival of original fabric, including joinery details. Its last known use was as a medical office.
Ablutions Block	1930s	This building formed the only internal connection between the police and prison side of the site via a bridge connecting it to Barrack Block. This was also the site of the original stables, coolies quarters and kitchens for the Barrack. In addition to containing WCs and showers, updates to the building added some administration spaces and a gym.
Central Magistracy	1913	This piece of colonial architecture was a symbol of the importance and power of the court, especially in the early years. Its public façade is massive as well as forbidding and was constructed to replace original magistracy building. The building is notable for its location on the site, separate from the prison and police yet providing an ‘all-in-one’ service tying the other two functions together – a highly unique setup in Hong Kong and elsewhere in the world. Following the end of Japanese occupation in 1945, the Central Magistracy was used as a tribunal for war crimes trials – many Japanese Army officers were tried and convicted here.
Superintendent’s House	1860s	This building was historically used as the main entrance to the prison; the blocked-up archway entrance and steps are still clearly visible today. The building was used as quarters and offices for the superintendent of the prison, but the ground floor was converted into the Accounts Office in the mid 20 th century.
A Hall	1940s	This is one of the later buildings on the site and is an example of post-war practicality and functional design. It was historically used as offices, and its last known use was as an Immigration Office. In later years, a room on the ground floor was used as a chapel.
B Hall	1910	This is the earliest example of a small-scale prison cell block of this style on the site and would have originally had locks produced and shipped from England, though there is evidence they were replaced following World War II. This building continued in use as a cell block through to decommissioning.
C Hall	1920s	The internal enclosed courtyard of this building is a feature unique to other prison buildings on the site. The building was last used as the Prison kitchen, immigration reception and workshops.
D Hall	1858	This prison building is the earliest remaining dateable structure on the site. It is also the only remaining part of the

		1858 "Radial Plan", a design rarely seen outside the United Kingdom and United States. The east wing functioned as the Female Prison from 1896 and the west wing was later used a hospital and infirmary.
E Hall	1915	Constructed using prison, this building is visible both from Arbutnot Road and Chancery Lane. It would have provided a public face of the prison to the outside world and is probably the most complete building on site with regards to original features. This building continued in use as a cell block through to decommissioning.
F Hall	1929	This is one of the most reworked areas of the site, with the earliest building located here in 1898 when it was the Printing Shop. The F Hall is a relatively new structure with internal fittings mostly from a refit in 1956. The building is significant more for its social history for it was used after 1956 as the Reception Centre for visitors, providing a connection between the prison and the outside world.
Bauhinia House	1850s	Though the actual construction of Bauhinia House likely occurred around 1858, the outer walls of the building are known to have existed on the site as early as 1851. The building served as a guard house and lookout. In 1984, it was converted into the first half-way house for female offenders.

Map of the 16 historically significant buildings identified for conservation and revitalisation



Central Police Station

- 01. Headquarters Block
- 02. Armoury and Store
- 03. Barrack Block
- 04. Dormitory Block A & B
- 06. Dormitory Block C
- 07. Dormitory Block D
- 08. Ablutions Block

Central Magistracy

- 09. Central Magistracy

Victoria Prison

- 10. Superintendent's House
- 11. A Hall
- 12. B Hall
- 13. C Hall
- 14. D Hall
- 15. E Hall
- 17. F Hall
- 19. Bauhinia House