

Hong Kong Institute of planners
Position Paper on the Conservation of Star Ferry and Queen's Pier

In view of the heated concerns on the conservation of the Star Ferry and Queen's Pier among the civil society and that planning being an on-going process, the HKIP launched a survey among their members to solicit their views on the issue. Members contributed detailed and constructive comments, which this position paper is based upon.

From the comments received, the majority treasured the historical, social and cultural values of the Star Ferry and the Queen's Pier and considered them worthy of conservation. The piers encapsulate the collective memory of Hong Kong people, and demarcate the location of our coastline at a particular point of time. On the other hand, the architectural style coincides with the Tsim Sha Tsui Star Ferry pier, and reinforces the Central-TST as the most popular ferry route in Hong Kong. From an aesthetic point of view, the clock tower was elegantly designed and well proportioned.

A few, however, consider that the piers, which are not graded buildings and have low architectural value, should give way to the essential transport facilities. The buildings might be too big for integration in the future designs of the area. The due statutory process should be respected and there should not be delayed in the implementation.

In order to conserve the true historical, social, cultural and architectural value and the collective memory of the heritage, in-situ conservation of the entire structure and the setting is advocated. Time, place, matters and people are the four major elements in recording history and Place (buildings) will last forever to tell the stories. However, some are of the view that an entire conservation scheme would not be practical or economically desirable but some requested for more information on the technical feasibility for in-situ conservation, cost and other alternative options to be studied before a decision is made. If in-situ conservation is proven to be infeasible, the structure should be relocated to similar location after reclamation in order to record the former edge of the harbour.

Regarding the future use and design of the old piers as well as the area between the old and the new pier, the majority considered that comprehensive planning in the context of the whole waterfront should be carried out. The structures of the piers can become landmarks for the area with the clock tower and Queen's Pier becoming the

key foci of the open-air piazza. The adjoining areas should maintain low-rise so that the clock tower can be visible from a distance. Visual relationship with the neighbouring uses should be carefully considered. The design of the proposed ground-scraper in the CDA zone should give respect and integrate with the conserved structures for compatible design and use. Innovative design with interlocking open space and landscaped promenade should be provided. A lagoon could be made to preserve the functions of the existing Star Ferry and Queen's Pier to give more character to this part of Central reclamation.

Other possible uses for the pier buildings include transport museum, art gallery, time corridor, alfresco dining, farmers market and tourism related uses, etc.

The HKIP therefore advocates a pragmatic approach to the conservation. While it is recognized that the current development proposals are legitimate and have gone through due statutory process, there are public demand on the in-situ conservation of the buildings and setting. There should be an informed discussion on the significance of the structures, the logistics and cost implications of conservation so that a rational decision can be made. However, it appears that such information are lacking.

In order to facilitate the implementation of the CRIII without much delay, it is proposed that the reclamation should proceed by building the southern seawall to allow some time for further study and investigation. Should in-situ conservation be proved not feasible, major elements of the Star Ferry, like the clock tower and the clock, plaque of the Queen's Pier, etc, should be conserved and relocated to a nearby site to demarcate the shoreline in the 21st Century.

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