

HEC Sub-Committee on Harbour Plan Review

**Proposed Minor Relaxation of the Statutory Height Restriction
for a Proposed Grade A Office Building at
863-865 King's Road, Quarry Bay**

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 Ubagan Limited have submitted two planning applications to the Town Planning Board (TPB) for a minor relaxation (i.e. 20% and 10%, respectively) of the building height restriction in respect of a Proposed Grade A Office Building at 863-865 King's Road, Quarry Bay.
- 1.2 As the proposed minor relaxation of building height of at least 10% will increase architectural flexibility within the proposed development to help achieve a number of design merits and public planning gain in line with the Harbour Planning Principles and Guidelines, the Harbour Enhancement Committee (HEC) is invited to give their support to the proposal.

2. BACKGROUND & HISTORY

- 2.1 On 13 March 2006, Ubagan Limited entered into a Memorandum of Agreement for Sale and Purchase in respect of 863-865 King's Road, Quarry Bay ("the Site") with the intention of redeveloping the Site from an industrial building into a prestigious Headquarters Building. At the time of purchase, the Site was zoned "Commercial" on the Draft Quarry Bay Outline Zoning Plan (OZP) No. S/H21/22 with no restriction on building height.
- 2.2 General Building Plans (GBP) for the originally intended design (Annex 1 refers) were submitted on 29 September 2006 with a main roof height of 230.21mPD. The GBP (BD ref: BD2/3007/06) were rejected on 27 November 2006 on primarily technical grounds. In para. 9(b) of the rejection letter, it was also stated :

"...the proposed storey height of the G/F lobby (11.5m), carparking levels 3.75m to 5.625m), office floors (4.7m) and refuge floors (9.4m) appears to be excessive. The AP should be advised to reduce the storey heights as far as possible".
- 2.3 Accordingly, on 12 December 2006, revised GBP were submitted to Buildings Department with all previously disapproved items already addressed, together with a voluntary (as it was not a statutory requirement) height reduction to the much lower main roof height of 178.559mPD. This height is lower than the ridgeline when viewed from Kai Tak Promenade, i.e. Vantagepoint 3 of the Urban Design Guidelines of Hong Kong (VP3).

- 2.4 However, on 29 December 2006 (which was immediately before a decision on the resubmitted GBP), the Draft Quarry Bay OZP No. S/H21/23 was gazetted and the Site was rezoned to “Commercial (Group 2)” with a maximum building height of 130mPD. On 10 January 2007 the resubmitted GBP were rejected under Section 16(1)(d) of the Buildings Ordinance primarily on the grounds that the building height of the proposed development contravenes the Draft Quarry Bay OZP No. S/H21/23.
- 2.5 Ubagan Limited accordingly lodged an Objection to the Quarry Bay OZP No. S/H21/23 necessarily under the old Town Planning Ordinance suggesting that the height restriction be revised to 156mPD. The Further Consideration of Objections was not heard by the Board until 5 October 2007 and was not upheld. It was, however, stated in the TPB decision that ***“The provision in the Outline Zoning Plan for minor relaxation of building height restriction through the planning application system will also allow the TPB to consider each case based on individual merits”***.
- 2.6 It is in the above planning context that Ubagan Limited has submitted two concurrent applications to the TPB for minor relaxation of the building height restriction. The first application is for a 20% minor relaxation of the building height restriction to enable a Grade A Office building at 156mPD to be developed on the Site. This building height will allow for desirable Grade A Office headrooms as well as allow for increased permeability within the podium structure. A second application is for a 10% minor relaxation of the height restriction to enable a Grade A Office building at 143mPD based on the minimum expected headrooms for a modern Grade A Office. Although neither scheme has significant visual impact, especially compared to other committed developments in the near vicinity, such as One Island East at 308mPD and approved plans for a building in the vicinity at 294.9mPD¹, Ubagan are pursuing the redevelopment scheme at 143mPD (i.e. a 10% relaxation of the building height restriction).

3. THE REDEVELOPMENT SCHEME (143mPD)

- 3.1 The Applicant intends to develop an attractive Grade A Office building as the prestigious Headquarters of Kerry Group and to help consolidate the Quarry Bay District as the primary Office Node on Hong Kong Island outside the Central Business District (CBD). As explained above and summarised in the attached Table, the current proposal has already been significantly compromised from the scheme originally intended and as permitted when the site was purchased in 2006.
- 3.2 The proposed development is a 30-storey Grade A Office building over a 4-level basement carpark. The Architect understands that such a deep basement carpark is less environmentally friendly in terms of energy usage and users’ environment, but such feature is required in order to allow for a Grade A Office headroom within the Office Tower (i.e. a 4.0m floor-to-floor height) whilst remaining within the 143mPD building height parameters.

¹ Building information as provided in Planning Application No. A/H21/96.

- 3.3 A podium (plus mechanical mezzanine floor) is proposed with voluntary set-back along Java Road Playground and Basketball Courts. The design intention is to reduce the height and bulk of the podium structure by redistributing GFA normally accommodated within the podium structure to the top of the Office Tower. The **ground level podium setback along Java Road Playground and Basketball Courts will provide a public passageway along a popular pedestrian route** between King's Road and Hoi Chak Street.
- 3.4 A typical floor-to-floor height of **4.0m** as proposed is a minimum for modern Grade A Offices and greatly compromised compared to the original intention for Office floors at **4.7m** based on the 230.21mPD scheme. Examples of recent Grade A Office Buildings include the AIG Tower in Central completed in 2005 which has a floor to floor height of **4.5m**, and No. 1 Wang Kwong Road in Kowloon Bay (also a secondary Office Node) which has recently obtained General Building Plan approvals for an Office Tower with floor-to-floor heights of **4.465m**.

4. DESIGN JUSTIFICATIONS

- 4.1 The originally intended scheme at 230.21mPD was to enable an iconic Grade A Office Building, incorporating a number of green features including, but not limited to, above-ground ventilated carparks, core atrium and multi-level skygardens for natural ventilation.
- 4.2 The imposition of the 130mPD height restriction has, however, precluded the incorporation of such building innovations and has also necessitated a much bulkier building with maximum podium coverage, resulting in adverse impacts on nearby visual receivers and on air ventilation. All carparking is also required to be accommodated within a 4 level basement which is less sustainable in terms of excavation wastes, artificial lighting and ventilation.
- 4.3 Given these constraints and Ubagan Limited's intention for a green and innovative Grade A Office, a relaxation of the building height restriction will allow for displacement of GFA from the podium onto the Office Tower to enable, at least, a slightly lower podium structure and a 3.8m ground level set-back along Java Road Playground and Basketball Courts with enhanced pedestrian linkage towards the Waterfront. The benefits include reduced podium bulk and reduced visual impact, better opportunity for landscaping in general and more visible landscaping at podium level, improved visual permeability at street level, reduced visual impact, improved airflow to King's Road and improved pedestrian connectivity between King's Road and Hoi Chak Street.

5. PUBLIC PLANNING GAIN

- 5.1 The ground level set-back and resultant pedestrian linkage will help create a more comprehensive local pedestrian system by connecting the existing footbridge from Model Housing Estate which has a landing near the Site, to Hoi Chak Street and Quarry Bay Park, following a natural pedestrian desire line. This pedestrian passage through the site will be open and accessible for all members of the public.

6. CONFORMITY WITH THE HARBOUR PLANNING GUIDELINES

6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 The Site is located in the northwestern portion of the Quarry Bay Planning Scheme Area with the Quarry Bay Commercial Node/ Tai Koo Place to the southeast and the North Point Commercial Cluster to the northwest. The Site is located between King's Road and Hoi Chak Street. On the far side (east) of Hoi Chak Street is Eastern Harbour Centre and Quarry Bay Park, beyond which is the Island Eastern Corridor and the Harbour. This Site is set back from the Waterfront, with a distance of approximately 160 metres from the Harbour. The Site is part of the Commercial Belt extending from Quarry Bay (One Island East) to North Point (K. Wah Centre) as viewed from the key viewpoints on the Ex-Kai Tak Airport Runway.

6.2 Public Engagement

- 6.2.1 The two Section 16 planning applications were submitted on 17 August 2007 and subsequently published for Public Comment for 3 weeks, during which time only 3 persons made comments, including one commenter who had no objection to either of the proposed heights.
- 6.2.2 This consultation with HEC also reflects the willingness of the Applicant to consult with key stakeholders.

6.3 Land Use Planning

Diversity of Uses

- 6.3.1 A new Grade A Office within the northwestern portion of Quarry Bay Commercial Node will help to revitalize and regenerate the existing old urban streetscape and character. A commercial podium, including restaurant use, will also provide more convenient and diverse use on this section of King's Road and Hoi Chak Street.

Open Space, Recreation and Leisure Uses

- 6.3.2 Adjacent to the Site (immediately to the north) is Java Road Playground, with two basketball courts and sitting-out areas. The Applicant will set back the ground level podium along the Playground to reduce the height and bulk of the podium structure, as seen in **Figure 1**. This setting-back at ground level will create a more spacious environment for the public and provide a better pedestrian route to Quarry Bay Park.
- 6.3.3 A garden terrace for casual leisure activities at the podium roof will also help enhance the greening and open space network.

6.4 Urban Design

Development Intensity

- 6.4.1 According to the Building (Planning) Regulations, commercial use on the Site is subject to a maximum Plot Ratio of 15. This is in line with development intensities of nearby commercial developments in Taikoo Place in Quarry Bay and on Java Road in North Point.

Building Height

- 6.4.2 The proposed building height of 143mPD is compatible with the commercial and residential developments within the surroundings. A survey of the buildings already built and under consideration show that newer buildings in the area have building heights of 140.9mPD to 298.8mPD (Main Roof Level), for example:

- Casa 880, a new residential building on King's Road (140.9mPD);
- Oxford House (170.4mPD);
- Cambridge House (160.9mPD);
- Proposed redevelopment of Warwick House, Cornwall House and Somerset House (approved plans at 160.0mPD and 294.9mPD²); and
- One Island East (298.8mPD). **(Figure 2 refers)**

- 6.4.3 Considering that taller buildings in the immediate vicinity exist, that the Site is part of the Quarry Bay Commercial Area, and that the Site is located sufficiently inland to maintain a stepping effect from the Waterfront, the proposed building height is not excessive and will not create adverse impact.

- 6.4.4 A set of photomontages of the Site with the proposed building heights was created to illustrate the visual impact. **Figure 2** shows the location of Vantage Points previously agreed with Planning Department and **Figures 3 and 4** illustrate the main roof level building heights of 130mPD (Statutory Height Limit) and 143mPD (Proposed Building Height) and their visual impact as seen from the selected Vantage Points. It is evident that the proposed development with minor relaxation in building height to 143mPD will not materially change the visual impact of the building at a macro-level as compared to a development that adheres to the Statutory Height Limit of 130mPD. As there are a number of existing and committed high rise developments in the vicinity, the proposed building height will be highly compatible with the general surroundings. The building height will also preserve views of the mountain ridgelines, with ample green backcloth also visible from these Vantage Points.

- 6.4.5 The proposed scheme will in fact result in great visual benefit at a micro-level by providing a lower podium height, a podium set-back for decreased ground level site coverage and greening in the form of, for instance, a landscaped podium.

² Building information as provided in Planning Application No. A/H21/96.

Permeability

- 6.4.7 Ground level permeability is achieved by reducing the podium coverage at street level to provide a 3.8m set-back along Java Road Playground and Basketball Courts as a public planning gain. Displacement of GFA from the podium to the top of the Office Tower will also allow for a reduced podium height. The overall reduction in the scale and massing of the podium structure will help to increase visual permeability and air flow between Hoi Chak Street / Quarry Bay Park and King's Road.

Streetscape Design

- 6.4.8 The Applicant intends to provide a reduced height, landscaped podium with ample greenery and podium edge planting, to soften the building edge near street level. The general streetscape will also be enhanced by the new Grade A Office façade, which will be a great improvement on the former industrial building on the Site.

6.5 Landscaping

- 6.5.1 Podium landscaping in the form of a garden terrace will be provided on the reduced height podium, ie. the first floor of the building, to provide visual amenity for pedestrians nearby and a pleasant environment for users of this casual leisure area.

6.6 Physical Linkage

- 6.6.1 The ground level set-back along Java Road Playground will facilitate pedestrian movement from King's Road to the Harbour-front via Quarry Bay Park. The new pedestrian linkage will help connect the existing footbridge from Model Housing Estate which has a landing near the Site, to Hoi Chak Street / Quarry Bay Park, following a natural pedestrian desire line.

6.7 Land Formation

- 6.7.1 As the Site is situated approximately 160 metres from the Harbour, no reclamation is required.

6.8 Harbour-Front Management

- 6.8.1 The ground level set-back along Java Road Playground will be accessible 24 hours free of charge to facilitate public access from the hinterland to the Harbour-front areas and the recreational space in Quarry Bay Park.

6.9 Sustainable Development

- 6.9.1 The higher headrooms achievable by the proposed relaxation of height restriction will help maximize natural lighting within the proposed Offices and thus reduce reliance on artificial lighting and associated energy consumption.
- 6.9.2 Other innovative and green building principles will also be adopted in the proposed development.

7. OTHER PLANNING JUSTIFICATIONS

7.1 Other planning justifications for the proposed minor relaxation include:

- Conformity with the planning intention in respect of the “Commercial (2)” zone to provide an incentive and facilitate conversion of the former industrial building to commercial use, thereby removing the former industrial/residential interface;
- Strengthening Quarry Bay as the primary Office Node with Grade A Office accommodation outside the CBD on Hong Kong Island, to sustain Hong Kong’s global competitiveness strictly in accordance with Metroplan, the Quarry Bay OZP Explanatory Statement (para. 5.2) and as supported by the “Study on the Propensity for Office Decentralisation and the Formulation of an Office Land Development Strategy” (1997, Planning Department);
- Meeting the demand for Grade A Office accommodation on Hong Kong Island. The supply is very limited, as One Island East (also in Quarry Bay) will be the only new supply of Grade A Office space on Hong Kong Island in the next 3 years;
- No adverse visual impact associated with the proposed 10% minor relaxation. In fact, the visual impact of the proposed development at 143mPD is virtually negligible compared to an Office development at 130mPD which is permitted as of right on the Site. There is no breaching of the background ridgeline and no “sore-thumb” effect. The green backcloth of the mountain range will also be retained to a reasonable degree;
- Enhancement of the overall greenery and character of the locality and setting a high standard to enhance the District; and
- Conformity with the Urban Design Guidelines of Hong Kong including the enabling of visual permeability from the Waterfront into the inner areas, diversity of building mass, enhancing air circulation for dispersing heat and pollutants by avoiding extensive podium structures, and maximization of greening.

8. CONCLUSION

In light of the justifications provided, the Committee is invited to support the proposed minor (10%) relaxation of building height restriction to 143mPD.

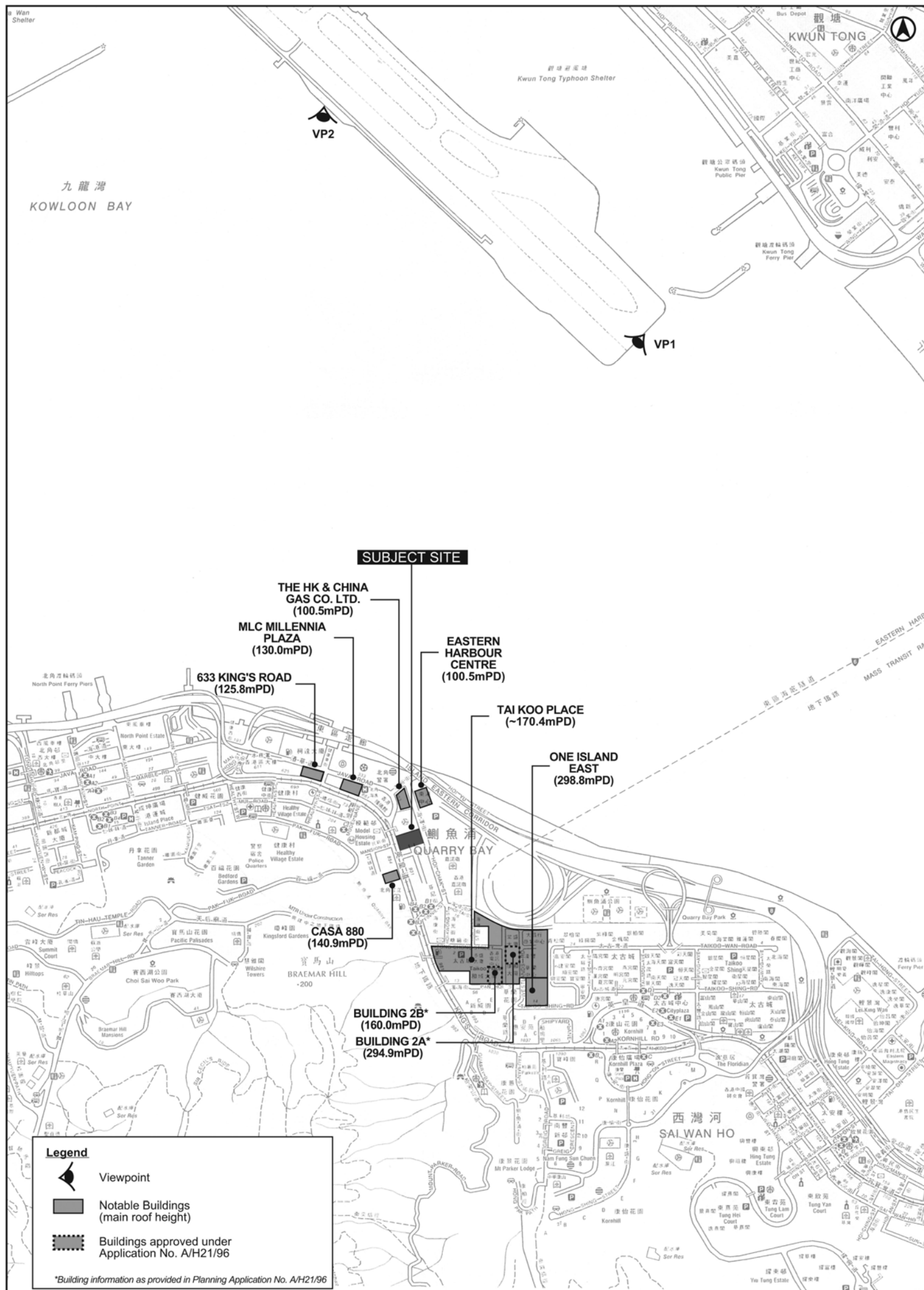
TOWNLAND CONSULTANTS LIMITED
On behalf of Ubagan Limited

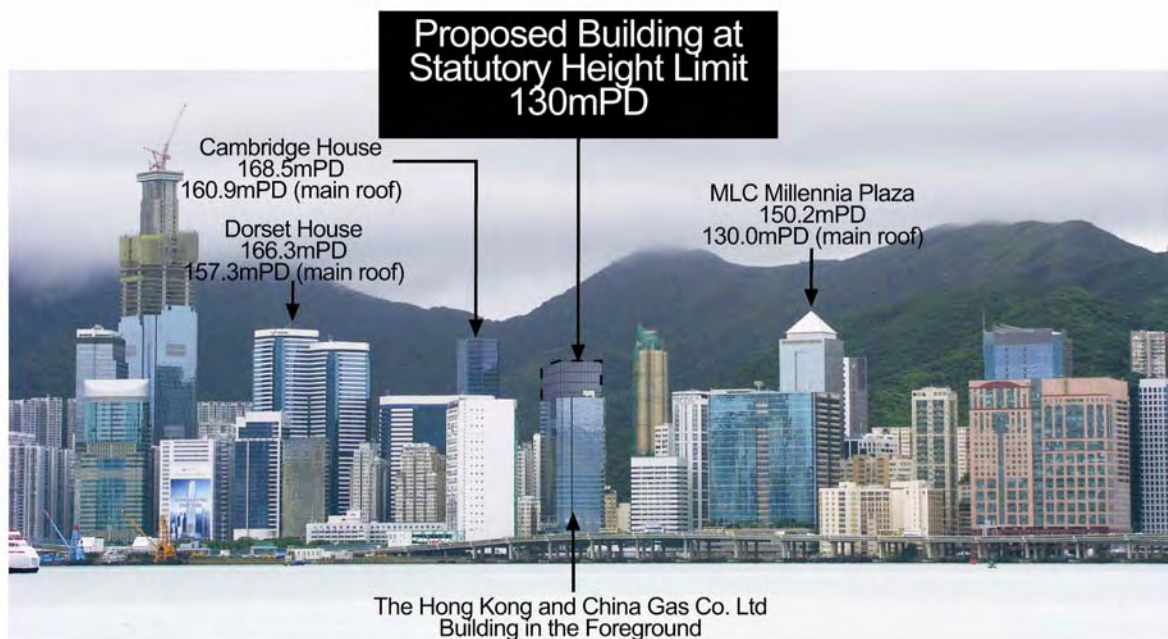
JANUARY 2008



KRHCS/2

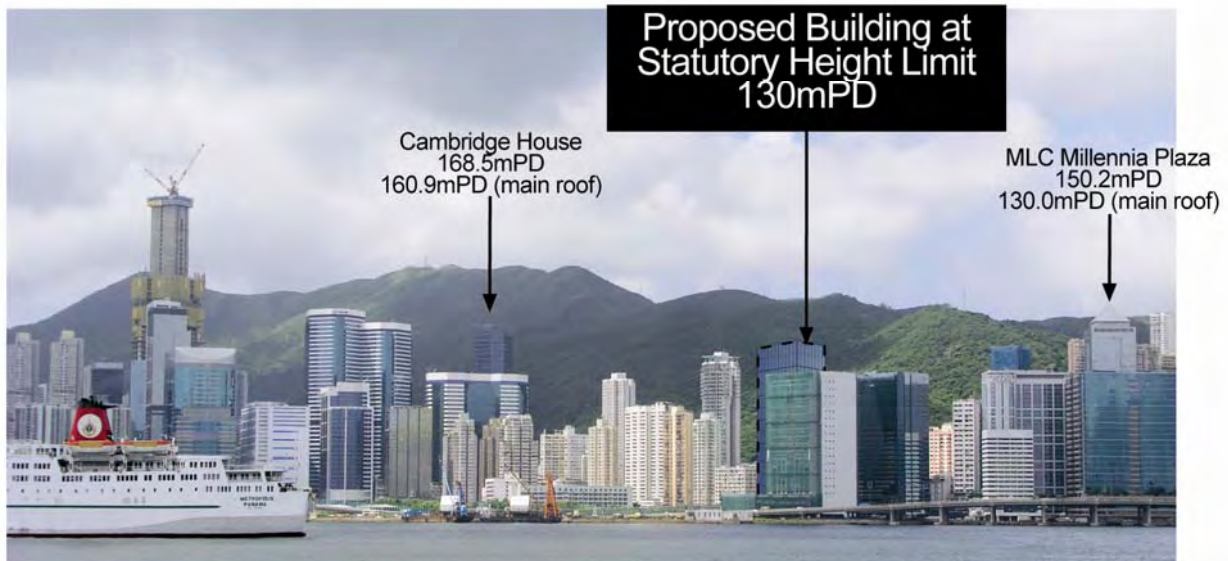
FIGURE 1 PUBLIC PLANNING GAIN - IMPROVED PEDESTRIAN LINKAGE
NOT TO SCALE



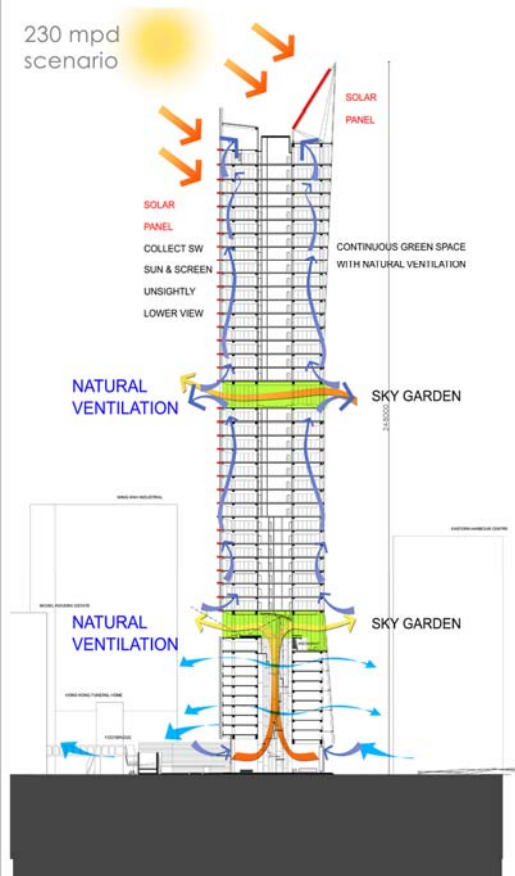
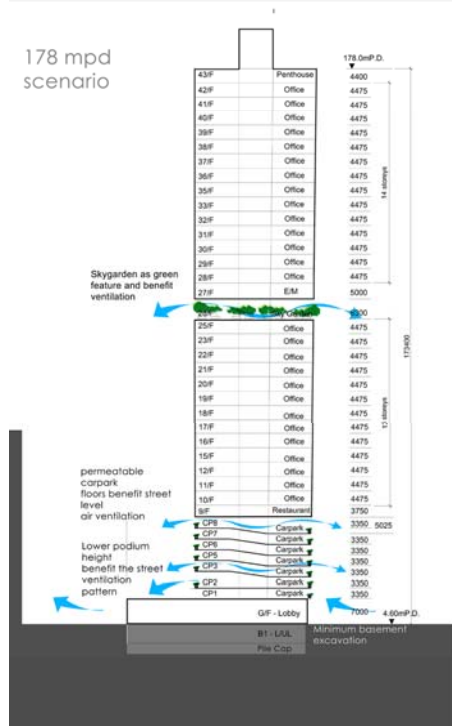
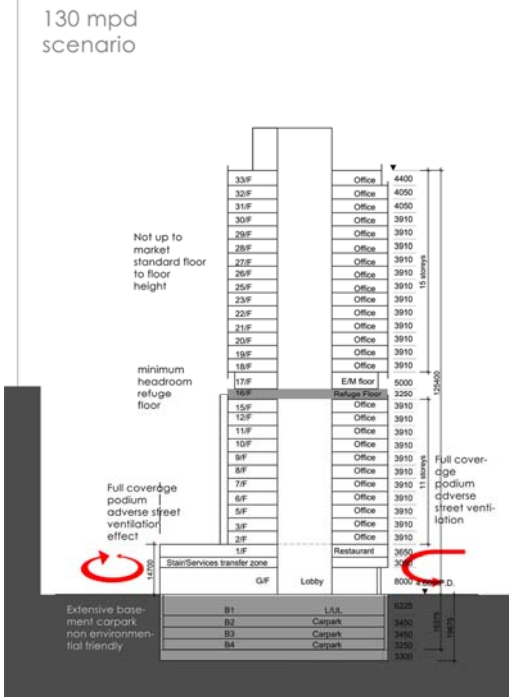
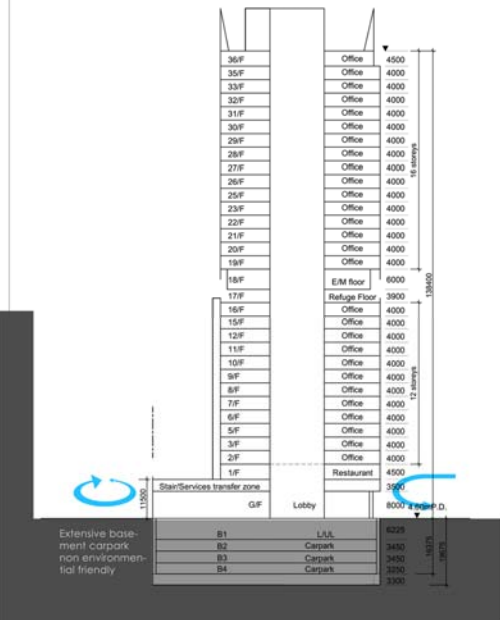


*Building information as provided in Planning Application No. A/H21/96

FIGURE 3 VIEW POINT 1 : INDICATIVE VIEW OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT FROM THE MIDDLE OF THE FORMER KAI TAK RUNWAY (LOCATION OF VIEWPOINT AS AGREED WITH PLANNING DEPARTMENT)



*Building information as provided in Planning Application No. A/H21/96

Main Roof level	230mpd	178mpd	130mpd	143mpd
Section				
Buildings Merits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Natural ventilated above ground car park• Open above ground car park enhance ventilation to King's Road• Light reflector at first sky garden to bring in natural light to car park floors• Multi double storey sky garden• Inter-floor natural ventilated green lounge (the green lung) on two side of building• Central Atrium connecting carpark floor to enhance natural ventilation• Slim building profile• Market standard Grade A office headroom• Breathing facade• Ionic land-mark to provide more interesting perspective• Building with small footprint and no podium• Allow better visual corridor and breezeway• Enhance diversity of building mass and create stepped building height profile• Allow physical linkage between King's Road and Hoi Chak Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Natural ventilated above ground car park• Open above ground car park enhance ventilation to model estate• Inter-floor natural ventilated green lounge (the green lung) on two side of building• Central Atrium connecting car park floor to enhance natural ventilation• Market standard Grade A office headroom• Building with small footprint and no podium• Allow physical linkage between King's Road and Hoi Chak Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Short building	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partial set back of podium to enhance pedestrian movement of neighborhood• Lower podium on King's road side• Market standard Grade A office headroom• Slightly improved mid level refugee floor headroom to allow minimal green installation
Compromise		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One mid level standard sky garden• No inter-floor green lounge• Less natural sunlight to car park floors• Increase in main tower coverage – more bulky building	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No sky garden (bare minimum headroom as refugee floor)• No inter-floor green lounge• Full underground car park• Full podium from ground to 15m• Maximum coverage for office tower – 'fat building'• Below market standard floor headroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No sky garden (bare minimum headroom as refugee floor)• No inter-floor green lounge• Full underground car park• Maximum coverage for office tower – 'fat building'