

S. C. M. P.

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A plea for Marine Police Station hill

I FULLY endorse the contents of the petition made by the Heritage Society to the Governor regarding the KCR building and environs as produced in your newspaper (S.C.M. Post, August 3). Having written once previously on this subject, I would like to reiterate a few points and add some comments which I feel relevant at this stage, especially with regard to the Marine Police Station hill.

The argument for the retention of the KCR building has been sufficiently covered and I consider this fine old edifice would make both a suitable entrance to the MTR extension to Lungom (if this ever materialises) and also a majestic foyer and ante-chamber to the main cultural complex building. The U-shaped terminus could easily be re-floored and a new roof erected, possibly involving the use of stained glass which would provide an opportunity for the exploitation of much artistic talent. This hall could then be used as a rather grand restaurant and or exhibition gallery and would back on to the main concert hall built on to and extending to the east of the present terminus.

My arguments for retaining the Marine Police Station hill and buildings are as follows:

- The high-rise building above the bus depot, which is planned for this site once the hill has been levelled, will spoil the Tsimshatsui skyline by further dwarfing those buildings with architectural merit which remain, namely, the YMCA and the Peninsula Hotel.

- If the MTR is to fulfil this main function of moving people from Central district to North Kowloon and Kowloon Tong it is obvious the need for buses from the Star Ferry terminus will not diminish.

- Indeed the Star Ferry Company has already expressed concern that the lack of passengers may mean a drastic curtailment of its present operations after the completion of the MTR, so it follows that bus services will also very likely suffer.

- What is the point of building a massive two-storey bus terminus when the need will no longer be there? It is fairly apparent to me that the money-generating high rise building above the proposed

bus depot is the prime excuse for such a move.

The planners explain that the present terminus would be converted into an open area for public use. Surely the new cultural complex can cater for such needs if the plans are anything to go by. In any case, those people still using the Star Ferry after completion of the MTR will want to be able to climb straight on to a bus and not walk a whole block and cross busy thoroughfares in order to do so.

- I understand the plan is to redevelop the whole block on which the Marine Police Station hill rests. This entails demolition of the Peking Road Market. Although of no historical value this building is of pleasing appearance due to its red brick construction and it does serve a valuable need in the area. The proposed new market for Tsimshatsui at a site between Kimberley Street and Kimberley Road on Carnarvon Road will be of no use to those people wishing to purchase goods prior to boarding their bus for home.

- Hongkong planners' chronic disregard for the poor pedestrian will again be apparent if this plan goes ahead. At present it is a definite hazard walking along the west side of Canton Road due to the numerous vehicular entrances and exits to Kowloon Wharf and Godown premises such as the Ocean Terminal, the Ocean Centre and the wharf areas themselves.

- If the bus depot is built, the pedestrian route along the north side of Salisbury Road will become even more dangerous with heavy buses continually entering and leaving the depot over the pavement. As it is at present the terminus is nicely confined with pedestrian flow moving freely and safely around the area in a circular movement.

- As evidenced in 1974/75 when part of the Marine Police Station hill was cut away for the new Kowloon Park Drive, the hill comprised solid granite. The noise, pollution and inconvenience which the removal of this hill will cause, plus the racket from the building of the cultural complex opposite will be almost unbearable.

- Not least in importance of course is the real historical value of the building which houses both the Tsimshatsui Police Station and the Marine

Police Headquarters. No one can deny that a building erected prior to 1884 and maintained in such remarkably good condition is a significant relic and should be opened up for all to see. The building could be put to numerous uses such as study rooms, a youth activity centre, restaurants etc and the once beautiful lawn and garden easily restored.

In any eventuality the two police stations will have to be moved. As yet plans to build the new Tsimshatsui Police Station in the northeast corner of the old Whitfield Barracks and a new Marine Police Headquarters at the old Naval Camber in Canton Road have to be realised and are unlikely to be for several years. This means that there is still plenty of time for reconsideration of the whole scheme as stressed in the petition to the Governor.

- Finally isn't it time we called a halt to all the destruction and reconstruction occurring continuously in Hongkong? Tsimshatsui is presently experiencing the disruption caused by the MTR, development of the Kowloon Wharf and Godown land in Canton Road, redevelopment of Hoi Tsang Wharf and soon the building of a massive new commercial centre to the east of Chatham Road and, of course, the erection of the Cultural Complex itself. These are just the major works in the area.

- Surely this is enough. The Hongkong resident is sick and tired of living and working in the middle of a building site and eyes, ears and lungs are suffering along with mental health. All this of course, is purely for financial gain. This is further evidenced by the Government's plans to tear down the area around Hanoi Road, Cornwall Avenue and Mody Road so that high-rise buildings can be erected.

- Also, the proposal to build shops along the west side of Nathan Road backing on to Kowloon Park. These plans and those for the new market have been severely criticised and opposed by the local kaifong association and other interested parties, but so far it looks like their protests have fallen on deaf ears. Maybe the people concerned have been deafened by their own wrecker's hammers.

EVER HOPEFUL