

19 October 2016

To: Central & Western District Council

Re: The General Post Office in Central, Hong Kong

Dear Chairman and Members of the Central & Western District Council,

The Central & Western Concern Group, the Victoria Harbourfront Concern Group, the Centre for Democratic Community Planning, Designing Hong Kong and Green Sense would like to register our concern for the proposed demolition of the General Post Office (GPO) Building in Central.

We are shocked that, according to the MPC Paper No. 16/16 considered by the MPC on 30 September 2016, the Government is planning to engage a developer to build new GPO facilities in Site 3 and to demolish the existing GPO. This is the first time we hear about this arrangement for this essential public amenity in Central. This arrangement is questionable. There is no transparency in the process and no public consultation on the decision.

Built in 1976, the GPO is a fine modernist building with a total floor area of 15,800 square metres. Docomomo International (*International Committee for documentation and conservation of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the modern movement*), with 69 chapters worldwide including Hong Kong and China, has recently included the Hong Kong GPO in its **Heritage In Danger** list.

Docomomo International stated: *"This monumental building, designed by a local architect, was completed in 1976, and it is serving its original function ever since. Built on a 3700 m² site in front of the towering Connaught Centre and adjoining the Star Ferry concourse, Hong Kong's GPO is a five-storey building. It was constructed in simple, geometrical modernist style..... **docomomo** International and **docomomo** Hong Kong would like to raise awareness for this case and express its full support to all the initiatives conducted against the demolition of aforementioned building, in struggle of preserving it for the future generations, either within the original function or reused for public purpose."*

The building's current function as a post office provides an essential amenity in the Central Business District. It is a well-designed, well-functioning building which can be used for many more years to provide postal services as well as adapted for other public uses. To demolish the building would result in the unnecessary loss of an architectural heritage and a sound, useable building. It would also result in negative environmental impact and the generation of large quantities of construction waste. There are strong justifications for the Government to either continue to use the GPO building for its existing function or to use the building for other public purposes in conjunction with its existing purpose.

We are extremely concerned why this important GIC site is being privatised, why a good solid GPO building has to be demolished, and why a developer is invited to design and construct a new facility.

Several important 20th-century architecture in Hong Kong, including the old Central Government Offices (built in 1953-59), the Hollywood Road ex-Police Married Quarters (built in 1951) and the Central Market (built in 1939) have been or will be put into good public uses, thanks to the Government's initiatives to revitalise significant public buildings. The GPO, being a great example of 1970s modernist public architecture in Hong Kong, is the best candidate which the Government should consider for retention and revitalization.

The Central & Western Concern Group, the Victoria Harbourfront Concern Group, the Centre for Democratic Community Planning, Designing Hong Kong and Green Sense request the Government to retain the existing General Post Office Building for its original function or reused for public purposes.

We request the Central & Western District Council to support community efforts to retain the General Post Office Building for public use.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Best regards,

Central & Western Concern Group

Victoria Harbourfront Concern Group (represented by Miss Tanya Chan)

Centre for Democratic Community Planning (represented by Dr Chan Ka-lok and Dr Edward Yiu)

Designing Hong Kong

Green Sense

Contact: Katty Law of Central & Western Concern Group - [REDACTED]

