

BASELINE CONDITIONS

1 General

There are three historical buildings within the DIH site. All three historical buildings are currently (at the time of writing this report) graded historical buildings. Their grading has however been reviewed recently in a comprehensive assessment of historical buildings by AMO on 15 June 2011 and proposed as follows:

<u>Built Heritage within Tai Hom Site</u>	AMO Grading	
	<u>Existing</u>	<u>Proposed</u> ^[1]
(1) Former Royal Air Force Hangar	Grade 3	Grade 3**
(2) Stone House No 4 at Tai Koon Yuen	Grade 3	No grade**
(3) Old Pillbox	Grade 2	Grade 2**

[1] As per AMO's List of the Historic Buildings in Building Assessment (as of 15 June 2011)

** Grading has been confirmed for the Historic Building as per AMO's list (as of 15 June 2011)

Note: The definitions of graded buildings in Hong Kong are as follows:

Grade 1 Buildings of outstanding merit, which every effort should be made to preserve if possible.

Grade 2 Buildings of special merit; efforts should be made to selectively preserve.

Grade 3 Buildings of some merit; preservation in some form would be desirable and alternative means could be considered if preservation is not practicable.

Although graded buildings and structures carry no statutory protection, the Government has administrative procedures that require conservation be given to those historic buildings and sites of cultural heritage. The principles in preserving built heritage are summarised below:

- Where practicable, *in-situ* preservation shall be considered as the first priority;
- Total destruction shall be the last resort and only recommended following meticulous and careful analysis balancing the interest of preserving cultural heritage as against that of the community as a whole.

2 Former Royal Air Force Hangar

2.1 History of the hangar before and during 2nd World War

Prior to the Japanese occupation, there were plans by the authorities to expand Kai Tak Airfield and build paved runways. For such purpose, the Former Royal Air Force Hangar located at the eastern end of the airfield and constructed in 1934 was dismantled in June 1941.

While it is not entirely clear when the Former Royal Air Force Hangar at Tai Hom was erected and by whom (Japanese or British), the current hangar was re-erected on-site around 1941-45. The hangar was designed to be taken down and reassembled quickly.

During the war, the Japanese succeeded the British plans to expand Kai Tak and build two paved crossing runways. Whether material from the dismantled Former Royal Air Force Hangar was used for the one at Diamond Hill is uncertain but the steel supports of the hangar do indicate that they were made in Britain. Regardless of who actually constructed the Former Royal Air Force Hangar, it is certain that it had been used by the Japanese troop during the 2nd World War.

2.2 Post 2nd World War

After the war, the Royal Air Force (RAF) made use of the hangar which included housing the Spitfire squadron. As the hangar was situated outside the confines of RAF Kai Tak, access to it was via a narrow road that crossed the Kai Tak Airport perimeter road (i.e. the current Choi Hung Road). This can be seen on an aerial photo circa 1955 according to the publication "Mapping of Hong Kong" with the hangar and the access road traversing the ring road i.e. Clearwater Bay Road - subsequently renamed Choi Hung Road.

The 1945-1958 Kai Tak Airport comprised two paved crossing runways that were built by the Japanese with British prisoner-of-war labour. The main runway in similar direction to the reclaimed runway at Kai Tak was located in the area that we know today as San Po Kong.

Prior to the closure of RAF Kai Tak in the 1970s, Kai Tak Airport and the airfield were divided into civilian and military use. The RAF had also occupied the eastern end of Kai Tak (next to today's Richland and Telford Gardens) whilst the civilian use was located at the western end. From the 1930s till 1941, the RAF and the Harbour Department (which controlled civilian airport operations) both operated their own separate hangars.

This Former Royal Air Force Hangar is the only surviving pre-war military aircraft hangar in Hong Kong. After the 2nd World War, the Former Royal Air Force Hangar had been used by the RAF until in the 1970's when the hangar was vacated.

Over the last 40 years after the use by the RAF, the Former Royal Air Force Hangar had served for various functions such as village industries and godown storage. The structure has fallen into disrepair with the roof exposed and overgrown with vegetation.

2.3 Structural Conditions

A structural survey was conducted in Jan 2009 on the Former Royal Air Force Hangar (see **Appendix 4.6**). The key findings and conclusion of the structural survey are summarised as follows:

- The general structural conditions are poor ;
- Most of the steel members are extensively corroded and deteriorating, which would significantly effect its structural integrity;
- The condition of the Hangar is currently not safe for public viewing.

2.4 Similar Heritage Resources in HK

According to the information in Hong Kong Aviation Club web-site, there used to be an aircraft hangar in their previous club house at Kai Tak before they moved to Shek Kong (ref <http://www.hkaviationclub.com.hk/nav4b.html>). The picture taken by Ron Pattinson also suggested that the shape and dimension was generally consistent with that in the former Tai Hom Village. However, all the aircrafts had been relocated to Shek Kong Airfield when Kai Tak was closed down in 1998. Hence, the Former Royal Air Force Hangar in Former Tai Hom Village is the only structure of its type in HK despite of its poor structural conditions.

3 Stone House, No.4 Tai Koon Yuen

3.1 An overview of the HK Film Production Industry

The film industry in HK first started more than a century ago and the first movie was probably produced at around Year 1909. Despite of the films production then, the first film production company wholly owned by Chinese, “民新電影廠” was established in 1924.

The strike in HK and Guangdong during year 1925 and 1926 had caused “民新電影廠” to close down their operation in HK and moved to Shanghai. Other smaller film production companies also moved to Guangdong during that period. However, the subsequent establishment of “香港電影公司” had been an important event to boost the film industry in HK. This was followed by “聯華影業公司” which established a film production studio and a movie school in HK in 1931.

Before the Japanese invasion in 1941, there was a few film production studios in HK established already. They included Nanyang Film Production Factory (南洋片場) and Dai Guan Film Production Factory (大觀片場) etc. All these facilities were however substantially destroyed during the war. Despite the lack of facilities, the film industry in HK continued to flourish and by the end of the 1940s, film production facilities such as 大中華, 長城, 鳳凰, 電懋, 國泰 etc, and in the early 1950's 永華 had been in operation. This situation continued to the 60s during which the variety of film production covered a large variety of themes. In 1961, the Shaw's Brother established a new facility in Clear Water Bay (清水灣影城) and since then it has been the major film production facility in HK.

A summary of the film production facilities after the war is listed below.

Table 1 Film production facilities in HK after the war ^[1]

Production Facilities	Location	Remark
民新	Causeway Bay (銀幕街)	Redeveloped
聯華	North Point (名園山)	Redeveloped
合眾	Kowloon City (九龍城)	Redeveloped
全球	Aberdeen (香港仔)	Redeveloped
南粵	Wanchai (利園山)	Redeveloped
國家	Wanchai (利園山)	Redeveloped
香江	Wanchai (利園山)	Redeveloped
大觀 (後移至鑽石山)	To Kwa Wan (北帝街)	Within DIH Site
明華	Hung Hom (溫思勞街)	Redeveloped
天一	To Kwa Wan (北帝街)	Redeveloped
世界	To Kwa Wan (北帝街)	Redeveloped
南國	To Kwa Wan (北帝街)	Redeveloped
南洋	To Kwa Wan (北帝街)	Redeveloped
大中華	Information not available	Redeveloped
邵氏	Information not available	Information not available
國家	Kowloon City (侯王廟)	Redeveloped
世光	Mongkok (何家園)	Partially Redeveloped
友橋	Kowloon City (九龍城)	Redeveloped
光明	Yau Ma Tei (油麻地)	Redeveloped

Production Facilities	Location	Remark
中南	Kowloon City (嘉林邊道)	Redeveloped
東南	Kowloon City (嘉林邊道)	Redeveloped
四達	To Kwa Wan (北帝街)	Redeveloped
香港片場	Kowloon City (九龍城)	Redeveloped
自由	Kowloon City (候王街)	Redeveloped
永華	Kowloon City (九龍仔)	Redeveloped
電懋	Diamond Hill (斧山道)	Redeveloped
華達	Kwai Chung (葵涌)	Redeveloped
香港	Diamond Hill (鑽石山)	Redeveloped
邵氏	Diamond Hill (鑽石山)	Redeveloped
長城	Kowloon City (候王道)	Redeveloped
亞洲	Diamond Hill (斧山道)	Redeveloped
大華	Kowloon City (候王道)	Redeveloped
清水灣	Tseung Kwan O (新界坑口)	Still operational
邵氏影城	Clear Water Bay (清水灣)	Still operational
世界	Diamond Hill (鑽石山)	Redeveloped
星光	Diamond Hill (鑽石山)	Redeveloped
聯合	Information not available	Information not available
國聯	Diamond Hill (斧山道)	Redeveloped
國泰	Information not available	Information not available

Note:

[1]: 《香港電影製片廠一覽 1946-1968》、載《戰後香港電影回顧》、香港：香港市政局、1979年，第154頁。

3.2 Dai Guan Film Production Factory (大觀片場)

The land of Tai Koon Yuen (大觀園) was originally part of a farming district before the 2nd World War. It was established by Yeung Shou-ren (楊守仁) from Shanghai in 1947. It took the name of the famous Chinese classic novel “the Dream of the Red Chamber” (紅樓夢).

The area was best known as a precinct of famous film studios near Former Tai Hom Village in the 1940s and 1950s. Dai Guan Film Production Factory (大觀片場) which subsequently became the Diamond Film Production Factory (鑽石片場) as well as Jian Cheng Film Production Factory (堅成片場) was located in the area. Well known movies and TV dramas were produced in these film factories, such as The Chronicle of Heaven Sword and Dragon Sabre (倚天屠龍記) by TVB in the early days. It also became the home to many people working in the film industry.

After the 1960s, the film studios together with the people working in the film industry moved out and squatters moved in. During the clearance of Former Tai Hom Village, Tai Koon Yuen was demolished only leaving the stone house formerly at No. 4 in the garden.

3.3 Stone House, No 4 Tai Koon Yuen

The Stone House, No. 4 Tai Koon Yuen was built in 1947 after the 2nd World War. It was originally owned by Wu Junzhao (吳君肇), the ex-manager of the former Shanghai Bank of Communications, and was subsequently rented to actor Qiao Hong (喬宏) between 1950s and 1960s. The neighboring house at

No 5 Tai Koon Yuen, now demolished, was once home of Li Hanxiang (李翰祥), a famous film director.

The Stone House, No. 4 Tai Koon Yuen was built of granite from quarry located within the Diamond Hill areas. It was a two storey building with temporary structure of corrugated steel sheets on the roof. The windows are framed with metal. The front part of the house is single storey with steel balustrade around the flat roof and used as a roof terrace. Over the past years, a number of its architectural features (e.g. steel window frames instead of Chinese, style greenish ceramic window, temporary squatter structure) had been modified to different extent and its current form is believed to be very different from its original built style during 1947 – 1960.

The Stone House, No. 4 Tai Koon Yuen is the only building survived of the Former Tai Hom Village. It is in disrepair and currently surrounded by perimeter fencing. Because of its linkage with the early history of the film production industry, its social value and local interest is relatively higher. In 2010, it gained the non-graded historic building status by the Antiquities Advisory Board.

3.4 Structural Conditions of Stone House, No. 4 Tai Koon Yuen

A structural survey was conducted in February 2009 on the Stone House, No. 4 Tai Koon Yuen (see **Appendix 4.7**). The key findings and conclusion of the structural survey are summarised as follows:

- The general structural condition is poor and not suitable for living;
- Part of the temporary squatter structure at the roof had collapsed;
- Spalling and exposed reinforcement found under the roof and on the wall;
- Most of the installation foam board in the audio room were damaged or in poor condition;
- If it is not properly repaired, this house would have the risk of collapsing.
- Careful planning is required to record each member of the house before dissembling into smaller pieces for relocation and later reassemble.

3.5 Similar Heritage Resources in HK

There are some stone houses of similar type in other places of Hong Kong. Examples are the one in Lok Fu district (within 何家園), and many others in the New Territories.

4 Old Pillbox

4.1 General

A fortified old pillbox lies to the centre-north of the Tai Hom area and close to the Former Royal Air Force Hangar. The old pillbox was constructed by the Japanese Air Force during the Japanese occupation to guard the eastern end of the Kai Tak Airport and for holding the route from the north.

The old pillbox is single storey with a dome-shaped roof of internal diameter of 3.9m. Part of the external wall was built approximately 1.7m below ground. The walls are made of hollow cut stone blocks which were rendered by cement. There were originally five firing loopholes in the dome walls, and a further one through the wall to the entry. The interior is commonly flooded as the floor is below ground level.

After the war, the old pillbox was abandoned and subsequently occupied by squatters. However, the old pillbox was retained after the demolition of Former Tai Hom Village in 2000 and is one of the few remains of the old Kai Tak airport.

4.2 Structural Conditions

A structural survey was conducted in February 2009 on the old pillbox (see **Appendix 4.7**). The key findings and conclusion of the structural survey are summarised as follows:

- The general condition of the old pillbox is more satisfactory as compared to the Former Royal Air Force Hangar and stone house, except for the delamination of the plastering at the roof and some broken pieces of brickwork.

4.3 Similar Heritage Resources in HK

There were over seventy old pillboxes around the coast on Hong Kong Island and many more inland at the ends of the reservoirs and on road junctions during 1941. They were mainly British built pillboxes. Many survived and lay disrepair nowadays. Some of these old pillboxes are:

<u>Some</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Old</u>	<u>Remark</u>
<u>Pillboxes in HK</u>			
Old Pillbox on Chung Hom Kok beach			The top of the pillbox is covered with debris that has fallen down from the hillside. But the top of the small round structure can still be noted. (ref http://www.batgung.com/node/1628)
Old Pillbox near Waterfall Bay (currently called Cyber Port)			It is constructed with an adjacent bunker. (ref ' Final EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) Report for Agreement No CE 92/97 ')
Old Pillboxes JLO1 and JLO2 at Wong Nei Chung			They were manned by 3 Coy (Eurasian) of the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps (HKVDC) (ref http://www.hkvca.ca/historical/banham.htm)
Old Pillboxes along the Gin Drinker's Line			The Gin Drinker's Line in the north of the Kowloon Peninsula extended from Gin Drinker's Bay in Kwai

Some Other Old Remark
Pillboxes in HK

Chung in the west, passing the Shing Mun Reservoir and Shing Mun River, Sha Tin, Tate's Cairn, Sha Tin Pass, to reach Sai Kung in the east. Its total length was 18 km.

Ditches, pillboxes and bunkers were also built along the line. This plan was once shelved but was relaunched in 1939. Construction of the line was completed in 1941.

(ref http://www.lcsd.gov.hk/en/ppr_release_det2.php?id=588)

Old Pillbox at Luk Keng

There are some trenches, pillboxes and observation posts in Luk Keng (ref "War Relics in the Green" by Ko Tim Keung)

These old pillboxes are constructed by the British troops but the old pillbox at Former Tai Hom Village is a Japanese built pillbox, of which it is the only one of its kind found in Hong Kong to date. Its historical value and interest is relatively high with a Grade 2 historic building status awarded by the Antiquities Advisory Board in 2002. It is part of the history of Japanese Invasion during the 2nd World war.

A complete picture of the old pillbox locations in the New Territories and on the Kowloon Peninsula is hard to find, but one exists for the Hong Kong Island can be found in the Japanese Record. They were targets of the Japanese during their invasion. Many of them survived till now, although their conditions do vary a lot.

It should be noted that the one at Former Tai Hom Village is one of the graded pillbox in Hong Kong.

5 Statement of Cultural Significance

When considering significance, a range of issue will be considered including, historic, aesthetic, architectural, scientific and social values of the building or site. Following criteria can be used in evaluating cultural significance:

- physical evidence gathered from the subject itself;
- the ability of the subject to demonstrate a philosophy, design, custom, process, use or function; and,
- associated links which are not attested or exhibited by any surviving physical evidence

A summary of the cultural significance of the 3 historical buildings is given below.

<u>Built Heritage</u>	<u>Cultural Significance</u>
Former Royal Air Force Hangar (Grade 3 Building)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The hangar is unique as the only surviving pre-war military aircraft hangar in Hong Kong• The hangar was first constructed in 1934 at the Kai Tak airfield, dismantled in 1941 and later re-erected at its current location. It was designed to be quickly disassembled and reassembled.• Due to lack of regular maintenance, the structure of the hangar is not intact which diminishes its aesthetic and architectural value.• Much of its surrounding associated historical landscape (such as the two crossing airport runways in 1945-1958) has disappeared and its original historical identity as a military aircraft hangar is blurred by previous use for small scale industries and godown storage.• Together with the old pillbox, they contribute to the recollection of wartime history.
The Stone House, No. 4 Tai Koon Yuen (Existing Grade 3 Building and proposed to no grading)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Stone House, No. 4 Tai Koon Yuen has historical linkage with Hong Kong's early film industry• Many of its architectural features had been modified to a form different from its original style during 1947 – 1960.• This building is a decent but not unique representation of this type of stone house architecture in Hong Kong. The interior structure of Stone House, No. 4 Tai Koon Yuen is not intact due to lack of regular maintenance.• The cultural significance of the Stone House, No. 4 Tai Koon Yuen is slightly diminished by the absence of nearby evidence of the early film industry in Hong Kong with which the building is associated. All previous film studios and associated production facilities have been removed during development in and around Tai Hom over the past 40 years.
The Old Pillbox (Existing Grade 2 Building and proposed to Grade 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The old pillbox is a part of the Japanese fortification of Kai Tak airport during World War II.• It is the only Japanese constructed pillbox and the only graded old pillbox in HK.• Much of its surrounding associated historical landscape has disappeared (such as the old Kai Tak airport during war time).• Together with the hangar, they contribute to the recollection of wartime history.