

GOVERNMENT NOTIFICATION.—No. 31.

The following Further Papers respecting the proposed New Government Offices, which were laid before the Legislative Council on the 25th instant, are published.

By Command,

J. H. STEWART LOCKHART,
Colonial Secretary.

Colonial Secretary's Office, Hongkong, 26th January, 1898.

(*Secretary of State to Governor.*)

HONGKONG.
No. 198.

DOWNING STREET,
9th October, 1897.

SIR,

I have the honour to forward, for your consideration, the enclosed copy of a Report by the Consulting Architects on the plans of the proposed new Government Buildings at Hongkong.

2. In view of this Report I consider that the general arrangement of the buildings should be further carefully considered by you, and if you are prepared to recommend the adoption of the suggestions of Messrs. WEBB & BELL, I request that you will send home revised outline or sketch plans to be again referred to the Consulting Architects.

3. These plans should show clearly the general arrangements proposed, but need not give details or be highly finished up; the details can be proceeded with, when the further Report from the Consulting Architects is received.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,

Your most obedient, humble Servant,

SELBORNE,
for the Secretary of State.

Governor Sir W. ROBINSON, G.C.M.G.,
&c., &c., &c.

(*Messrs. Aston Webb & E. Ingress Bell to Crown Agents.*)

19, QUEEN ANNE'S GATE, WESTMINSTER S.W.,
September 15, 1897.

Hongkong—Plans for Government Buildings—Reqn. 2642.

GENTLEMEN,

Having carefully considered the matter and after two interviews with Mr. GALE, we beg to report as follows:—

We are of opinion that the best method of providing a secure foundation for the buildings is by piling with hard wood piles as proposed. But we would urge that instead of grouping the piles under each column, they should be placed at equal distances along the frontage, that their heads should be connected by a grillage in the usual way, and that the Portland cement concrete laid thereon should be continuous. By this construction there would be less likelihood of a dislocation of the entablatures of the colonnade, by the subsidence of any individual point of support.

With reference to the question of cost, we are of opinion that a less costly style of building cannot properly be adopted considering the uses and importance of the buildings. Granite is the local, and, indeed, almost the only available, material, and as the cost of granite, worked and set, is in Hongkong only the price of Bath stone in England, we do not think its use, for the proposed Government buildings, in any way extravagant.

We may as well say here that we have had a careful detailed estimate prepared and priced in accordance with the Government schedule in local use; although the cost appears an astonishingly low one, for buildings of this character, our inquiries have all tended to confirm the official estimate.

With reference to the plans under consideration, we think it right to say that considering the difficulties of the site and area, under which they have been prepared, great ingenuity has been shown in meeting the requirements as far as possible, but we cannot consider them an altogether satisfactory solution of the problem.

The order of procedure in the Law Courts in Hongkong does not differ in essentials from that which obtains in England, and the provisions requisite for the orderly and convenient working of the establishment are, generally speaking, the same. There should be a Central Hall, large, lofty, well-lighted and well-ventilated, for the use of the general public having business with the Courts, and to which the public should be almost entirely restricted. From this Hall, direct access should be had to each Court through intervening lobbies. There should be at least two Waiting Rooms for Witnesses immediately wanted. There should be a "Bar" corridor and Reading Room which would be limited to the use of the Bar or, at most, shared by the Judges. There should be a Solicitors' Corridor, with suitable consultation rooms which are most desirable for use in the intervals of the sitting of the Courts. There should be a Prisoners' Entrance, and Detention Rooms, whither they could be directly brought for trial, and whence they could reach, by a special route, the steps leading immediately to the Dock, and by which they could also be removed after sentence.

The Judges and the Bar should have equally distinct entrance and exit, from the purlieus of the Courts. The several accessories should be arranged for the particular use of Judge, Bar, Jury, Witnesses and Public, and placed accordingly. We submit that, in respect of some of the above points, the plans, as they stand, are defective and in others deficient.

We are given to understand that the Registrar's Department and the space allotted to the Bailiffs and Interpreters are necessarily placed on the Ground Floor of the Court block and that the area allotted to them cannot be reduced. This being so we can only come to the conclusion, that the area of Plot No. 1 is insufficient for the proper housing of the legal offices. A glance at the plan will show that the arrangements are already somewhat congested and that there is no adequate space available for the proper disposition of the necessary rooms as above indicated, and would render any future extension impossible.

Plot No. 2 is, on the other hand, somewhat sparsely occupied. The handsome western frontage with its double-storied colonnade is for the most part a screen, to small and unimportant offices and the entire centre part of the upper floor, on the north front, is a mere shell to protect from the direct rays of the sun the skylight, which gives a borrowed light to the Entrance Hall of the Post Office. We cannot but regard the interruption of the public footway by the raised portion outside the Delivery Office, as an inconvenience to the public which should be avoided.

It will therefore be seen that, while Plot No. 1 appears insufficient for its purpose, Plot No. 2 is somewhat in excess of the requirements, and we would suggest for consideration the following schemes:—

Scheme A.—Placing the Courts and their accessories on Plot No. 2 and the Post Office, &c. on Plot No. 1. This would necessitate the raising of a central portion of the Post Office building an extra storey which could be reached by lifts, and taking into consideration the expensive character of the foundations the further utilisation of the site, in this manner, seems an economical one.

Scheme B.—The Plots Nos. 3 and 4 (on the accompanying sketch), now the property of the Bank, could perhaps be acquired, and, if so, their cost would be less now than after the other available building and space has been occupied.

We would propose that the Sanitary Board and the Department of Public Works should be located on Plot No. 3, the Colonial Secretary and Treasurer on Plot No. 4, the Post Office on Plot No. 1, and the Law Courts, &c. on the ampler Plot No. 2.

This would concentrate the Government Establishment giving sufficient room for each and facilitate their natural intercourse. It would avoid overcrowding which is especially undesirable and probably leave some margin for any extension which may hereafter be found desirable.

Pending some further discussion of the question from these points of view, it is perhaps premature to offer any remarks on the details of the designs, which you have referred to us.

We return herewith the six drawings and the original papers forwarded to us with your letter of July 27th.

We are, &c.,

ASTON WEBB & E. INGRESS BELL.

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS ON COLONIAL
OFFICE DESPATCH No. 198 OF 1897, REGARDING
THE NEW GOVERNMENT OFFICES, &c.

1. The Report of the Consulting Architects practically condemns the plans submitted *in toto*. With regard to the Courts much of the accommodation which they consider essential is absent, and the space on Plot 1 is too limited to admit of the construction of such a Court and connected Chambers, Corridors, and Offices as they deem requisite, while future extension would be impossible. For various other reasons they report as strongly against the proposed buildings on Plot 2.

2. They then proceed to make two suggestions: Scheme A. to place the Courts and their accessories on Plot 2, and the Post Office, &c. on Plot 1. Scheme B. to acquire two more plots, and distribute the various buildings required over a greater area.

3. Both proposals necessitate the preparation of entirely fresh plans.

I am not now in a position, in the absence of Mr. GALE, to undertake the preparation of such plans even in outline and unfinished as suggested by the Right Honourable the Secretary of State, but would ask to be informed if Scheme B. would, under any circumstances, be entertained by His Excellency the Governor.

4. As I find that no provision has been made in the Estimates for 1898 for the proposed buildings, I conclude there is no immediate hurry for new designs; and if His Excellency is of opinion that the first proposal of the Architects which they call Scheme A. should be adopted, I would ask that the matter be allowed to stand over till Mr. GALE's return in April next.

5. I venture, however, now to propose a scheme which has not, as far as I am aware, been put before His Excellency yet, for meeting the undoubted urgent want of the Colony in the matter of better Courts, Post Office, and Offices for certain other of the Departments of the service.

6. The arrangement and condition of the present Offices is very fully described by the Committee appointed to report on the subject in 1896, and with that description I concur except as regards the Public Works Offices. I do not consider these Offices badly arranged or too small for present requirements, and it is quite possible to improve the lighting of the side of the building now deficient in that respect.

The description of the buildings occupied by the Courts, the Post Office, the Land Office, the Treasury, and the Registrar General is by no means too strongly condemnatory. It must be patent to all that "the requirements of the Colony have entirely outgrown the accommodation at present available."

7. The proposals I now wish to submit to His Excellency are briefly as follows:—

- (a.) To adopt the recommendation of Messrs. ASTON WEBB and INGRESS BELL and devote Plot No. 2 on the new Praya to the new Courts and their accessories, calling on those gentlemen to prepare a suitable design, worthy of the Colony and of this prominent site.
- (b.) To devote the site now occupied by the Courts and the Post Office to a new Post Office and Treasury.
- (c.) To acquire "Beaconsfield" permanently for the accommodation of the Education Department, the Registrar General, and the Sanitary Board—the Colonial Secretary, the Auditor and the Public Works Department continuing as at present to occupy the Offices in St. John's Place.

8. There seems to be no reason whatever why the Courts should be in close proximity to any of the other Public Offices while the arrangements I propose would bring those Offices together, which for the facilities thereby afforded for the transaction of public business, should be intimately connected.

On the other hand, there is much to be urged in favour of keeping the Post Office on the present site; it is very central, close to the Banks, the hotels, the busiest part of Victoria, and the pier at which all mails and passengers will land.

9. The Harbour Department should, I think, certainly have new Offices on the Reclamation in front of the present Harbour Office, and I note that the estimated cost of the building is \$110,000.

10. The question of store accommodation for the Public Works Department is pressing, but should, I think, be dealt with separately as it in no way affects the other proposals.

11. Financially my proposals would work out as follows:—

Cost of new Courts, &c. on Plot No. 2,	\$400,000
Cost of new Post Office and Treasury,	150,000
Cost of "Beaconsfield,"	80,000
Cost of new Harbour Office,	110,000
Total,—————	\$ 740,000

On the other side:—

Sale of Plot No. 1, 33,724 square feet at \$10,.....	\$337,240
Sale of site of present Land Office and Crosby Store, 16,078 square feet at \$10,.....	160,780
Rents now paid or to be paid next year for Offices capitalized,.....	80,000
Total,—————	\$ 578,020

Net cost of proposed new Offices to Government, say, \$ 162,000

12. In estimating the cost of the new Courts and new Post Office I have been guided by the cost per cubic foot and per square of floor of buildings already erected and being erected on the new Praya. These are handsome buildings of first class workmanship, and I think their cost may be taken as giving a good idea of what the Courts would cost. I learn the Club buildings including all fittings, &c. cost \$170,000.

13. Should my proposals meet with the approval of His Excellency the Governor I would suggest that the Consulting Architects be furnished with an exact plan of Plot No. 2, and photographs of the New Club, Messrs. BUTTERFIELD & SWIRE'S Offices, and the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank and elevations of those buildings in order that, if possible, the designs for the new Courts may harmonize with the adjacent buildings.

The design for a new Post Office could, I consider, be made locally, from its position, no striking architectural effects would be necessary or desirable. The elevation should follow that of the new buildings in Queen's Road such as the Chartered Bank, and the internal arrangement of public rooms and offices could probably be better decided on the spot.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

R. D. ORMSBY,
Director of Public Works.

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE,

At a meeting held on the 13th January, 1898.

PRESENT:

The Honourable The Director of Public Works, (*Chairman*).
The Honourable The Colonial Treasurer, (T. SERCOMBE SMITH).
The Honourable C. P. CHATER, C.M.G.
The Honourable T. H. WHITEHEAD.
The Honourable E. R. BELLIOS, C.M.G.

Subject for consideration:

“The Scheme of the Director of Public Works for New Government Offices.”

The Chairman reminded the Committee that at a previous meeting no resolution had been proposed, but the subject had merely been discussed and its consideration postponed.

Since then a different scheme for the New Government Offices had been prepared by an Honourable Member of the Committee and circulated, and he left it for the Committee to decide whether they can discuss that scheme as well, seeing that it had not yet been before His Excellency and referred to them for report. The Committee decided that both schemes should be considered.

After discussion, it was proposed by the Honourable the Treasurer and seconded by the Honourable Mr. BELLIOS that the scheme of the Director of Public Works be approved by this Committee, and its adoption recommended to His Excellency the Governor.

The Committee divided with the following result:—

<i>Ayes.</i>	<i>Noes.</i>
The Hon. the Treasurer.	The Hon. C. P. CHATER, C.M.G.
The Hon. E. R. BELLIOS, C.M.G.	The Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD.
The Chairman.	

The Chairman declared the resolution carried.

The following protest was handed in by the Honourable T. H. WHITEHEAD.

Mr. WHITEHEAD desired that his protest should be recorded against the Honourable E. R. BELLIOS, C.M.G., being permitted to second and vote, the honourable member being directly and pecuniarily interested in the question under consideration, the question being that the Government should purchase “Beaconsfield,” a property owned by the said Mr. BELLIOS, and Mr. WHITEHEAD further desired to refer, in support of this protest, to May’s “Parliamentary Practice,” 9th Edition, page 420, where the rule as to Members of Parliament is laid down in the plainest language. It reads—

“In the Commons it is a distinct rule that no member who has a direct
“pecuniary interest in a question shall be allowed to vote upon it,
“but in order to operate as a disqualification this interest must be
“immediate and personal and not merely of a general or remote
“character. On the 17th July, 1811, the rule was thus explained
“by Mr. Speaker ABBOTT ‘this interest must be a direct pecuniary
“‘interest and separately belonging to the persons whose votes were
“‘questioned and not in common with the rest of His Majesty’s
“‘subjects or on a matter of State policy.’”

Mr. WHITEHEAD also desired to refer, if further authority is necessary, to Buckley’s Companies Acts, 7th Edition, page 542, where it is laid down that although no Director shall vacate his office by reason of his being a member of any firm having contracts with the Company of which he is a Director, “nevertheless he shall not vote in respect of such contract or work, and if he does so ‘vote his vote shall not be counted.’”

R. D. ORMSBY,
Chairman.

Hongkong, 14th January, 1898.

MR. CHATER'S PROPOSAL.

The scheme I now beg to propose for the future accommodation of the Government Offices is as follows:—

GENERAL SCHEME.

1. To adopt the recommendation of Messrs. ASTON WEBB and INGRESS BELL and to build the Law Courts and accessories, including Land Office, on Plot No. 2 *i.e.*, the back and larger block in front of the City Hall.
2. To build on Plot No. 1, *i.e.*, the front Lot on the Praya Reclamation, a block of Offices, the Ground Floor being for Post Office, First Floor for Treasury, Assessor and Sanitary Board, and Second Floor for Public Works Department.
3. The existing Government Offices, St. John's Place, to be occupied on First Floor by the Colonial Secretary, Auditor, Council Chamber, &c. as at present, and the Ground Floor, now occupied by the Public Works Department, to be given to the Registrar General's and Education Department.
4. A new Harbour Office to be built on the Praya Reclamation in front of the present Harbour Office, as recommended by the Director of Public Works.
5. My reasons for proposing a scheme differing somewhat from that recommended by the Director of Public Works are as follows:—

ADVANTAGES OF SCHEME.

6. The Post Office would be on the new Praya facing the Harbour and in the natural site for same, mails can be expeditiously and safely landed and despatched at a wharf opposite the site, which is not usually used by launches and ferry boats, these going to the Ice House Street and Pedder Street Wharves.
 7. The proposed site, and not the present position, of the Post Office will, in the course of a short time, be in the very centre of all the Banks, Insurance Offices and principal European and Indian merchants of the Colony, and these are by far the principal users of the Post and not the Chinese, who will in a few years entirely surround the present Post Office and Law Courts. The proposed site would be convenient for the Military and Navy, and also those frequenting the Law Courts and Land Office, who constantly require various description of stamps.
 8. By placing the Treasury, Assessor, Sanitary Board and Public Works Department in the same building, communication, which is frequent between these Departments, is rendered easy and the transaction of public business greatly facilitated.
- The Public Works Department will also have in the proposed new Offices ample light, which is very deficient in the present rooms.
9. It is very desirable that a building on the front block, facing the Harbour, should be at least three stories high or the building will be dwarfed by the adjoining blocks on either side which are four stories.
 10. By utilizing the Ground Floor of the Government Offices, St. John's Place, the Education and Registrar General's Departments, are brought to the same building as the Colonial Secretary's, which would be very convenient, as the two latter Offices are held by the same Officer.

FINANCIAL.

11. As regards the financial part of the question, I will take, as far as possible, the figures given by the Director of Public Works, and it will be found that my proposed scheme is at, practically, the same cost as that of the Director of Public Works, while it centralizes all the Government Offices and provides new buildings in a good position in place of detached Offices and old buildings.

12.	Cost of new Law Courts, &c. on Plot No. 2 as estimated by the Director of Public Works. ...	\$ 400,000
	Cost of new Post Office and Treasury as estimated by the Director of Public Works, ...	150,000
	In proportion to the above costs, allow for additional storey to Post Office, say,.....	40,000
	More handsome elevation on New Praya and more expensive foundations, say,	50,000
	Cost of new Harbour Office as estimated by the Director of Public Works,	110,000
	Total,	\$ 750,000

