

# **The Chinese University of Hong Kong Campus Master Plan Appointment of Consultant**

## *Background*

The Chinese University of Hong Kong has the largest and greenest campus in the territory. Over the last 40 years, campus planning and development have undergone several phases as the University population has been rising and the University itself rapidly developing into an eminent seat of learning and research in the region. With the reversion to a four-year normative curriculum in 2012 and the adoption of a Strategic Plan which lays down the strategic directions for development in the next decade, the University needs a visionary blueprint for its campus for the years leading up to 2021 and beyond.

## *Mission and Concept of CMP*

The Chinese University aspires to scale new heights of academic excellence as an international research-led comprehensive university in China and the region. The Campus Master Plan (CMP), formulated on the basis of the Ten-year Strategic Plan adopted in 2006, is crucial for the University's development in the next decade and beyond. Growth in student numbers is anticipated, in particular, upon the reversion to a four-year normative curriculum in 2012. The organic development of CUHK into a leading comprehensive research university also means that more space and facilities are required for teaching and research. In order to maintain the beauty of our campus so that it serves as a tranquil setting for the academic pursuits of ourselves and our successors, the University strives to achieve harmony between development and conservation. Sustainable development is both our pledge and our challenge.

Given these considerations, the University has decided to embark on mapping out a visionary and sustainable CMP. It will place campus development within the context of a unified vision, which will be arrived at with the participation of University members and the contribution of external experts.

## Campus Master Plan

It is important to bear in mind that the CMP will be a living and developing document setting out the vision of a plan that would ensure balanced and sustainable development of the University campus in the coming decades and laying down development guidelines for the reference of builders engaged for specific projects in future. As such, it is not a fixed design but a strategic approach that can respond to changing conditions and which will decidedly be reviewed from time to time.

## Participatory planning

In achieving the University's strategic objective, the process of consultation is as important as the final deliverables. The University is fully committed to participatory

planning for the CMP which means that every member of the University community would have ample opportunity to give his/her view and participate in the process. Wherever possible, views conducive to achieving the development objectives would be duly incorporated in the CMP.

### *Consultation*

The Steering Committee on Campus Master Planning was formed in 2006 to oversee the formulation of the CMP. Co-chaired by a Pro-Vice-Chancellor and a Professor of Architecture, its members include experts of architecture, environmental planning and conservation from both outside and within the University. Its primary tasks include engaging and guiding professional consultants in the drafting of preliminary proposals, disseminating information to various stakeholder groups and collecting feedback, deliberating on selection criteria of consultant and recommending to the University a professional consultant to take the project forward.

In early 2007, architectural firms were invited to make prequalification presentations on the CMP. Subsequently four consultants, each comprising a local lead consultant and an overseas campus planning expert, were shortlisted to prepare the preliminary proposals which were meant to generate discussion and feedback.

In September 2007, the Steering Committee launched an extensive feedback collection programme to gather views on the planning principles of CMP and the preliminary proposals. A series of presentation sessions, discussion forums and meetings enabling face-to-face dialogue between the Steering Committee and the University community was organized. The four consultants were invited to present and explain their proposals on selected occasions. An exhibition of the four proposals was held at various venues on campus. A website ([www.cuhk.edu.hk/cmp/](http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/cmp/)) dedicated to the CMP was also set up to collect views and provide updates on the CMP, the University's 'green' newsletter *Sustainable Campus* kept the University community up to date on the progress of the CMP project, and three open letters were sent via mass email to all CUHK members.

By mid-November 2007, the Steering Committee had received over 140 constructive comments in written and other forms, from staff, students and alumni, addressing a range of issues including planning objectives, campus organization, and the feedback collection exercise.

The exercise was successful in soliciting useful feedback from the University community at large and helped to bring into focus some of the concerns and aspirations of members of different stakeholder groups. For example, it was thought that the unique college system of the University should be preserved and the University Mall was commonly viewed as the centerpiece of University activities. Common misconceptions such as that the preliminary proposals were actual designs to be adopted and that development would exact a toll on the University's heritage were clarified and dispelled in the consultation process.

### *Appointment of Consultant*

After careful assessment with strict adherence to a set of criteria including the consultants' dedication and strength, innovativeness, practicality and attention to issues of sustainability, heritage preservation, environmental conservation, pedestrian and vehicular traffic, landscape and building approach, and cost, the University has decided to award the consultancy contract to Aedas Limited and its overseas partner Edward Cullinan Architects (UK).

Aedas is the fourth largest architectural practice in the world and has a wealth of experience in architectural design and planning. Aedas has a strong presence in the education sector and has received many awards in institutional design including the HKIA Medal of the Year for the HKIEd Jockey Club Primary School. It has carried out design works for, among others, The University of Birmingham in the UK and Columbia University in New York, Dillard University in New Orleans and Vanderbilt University in Nashville in the US. World-renowned architectural firm Edward Cullinan Architects has taken part in many world-class projects, including Liverpool University and Singapore Management University. It has a reputation for designing carefully composed projects with a continuing focus on energy conservation and sustainability.

The Steering Committee has been impressed with the creative but practicable proposal of the Consultant, which demonstrated understanding of the University and remarkable team performance in the consultation activities. They have given due recognition to the University Mall as the centerpiece of the CUHK campus and amplified its strength in innovative ways and at the same time respected the tradition and the unique college system and offered the best fit to the University's planning principles. More importantly, the team is selected because it shares our ideal of a sustainable campus.

The selection of Aedas and Edward Cullinan does not necessarily mean that the University adopts their preliminary proposal or that it would form the basis for the CMP. What the University has selected is the team rather than the preliminary proposal which is only a measure of the planning approach of the team and their capability. It is expected that the consultant would, after gathering further feedback from different stakeholder groups, inject new creativity into the conceptual formulation of the CMP and then the detailed CMP.

### *Way Forward*

Subsequent to the appointment of Aedas and Edward Cullinan to undertake the CMP, an extensive consultation exercise will be conducted with members of the University to listen to their comments and views, and to ensure wide engagement in the process. Stakeholder engagement workshops will be organized starting March 2008 so that members of the University community can meet with the Consultant. The Consultant will be given sufficient time to fully understand the concerns and detailed requirements of different stakeholders and to make the necessary adjustments and refinement so as to ensure that the University community at large will have the ownership when adopting the CMP. The CMP is anticipated to be formulated towards the end of 2008.