



**STUDY OF
THE HERITAGE CULTURAL
LANDSCAPE
OF
FANLING GOLF COURSE**

May 2023



REVIVAL
Heritage Consultants Limited

**Fanling Golf Course possesses
an extremely high heritage significance
as a **designed cultural landscape****

**Fanling Golf Course should be preserved in
totality and zoned as a heritage and
recreation site**

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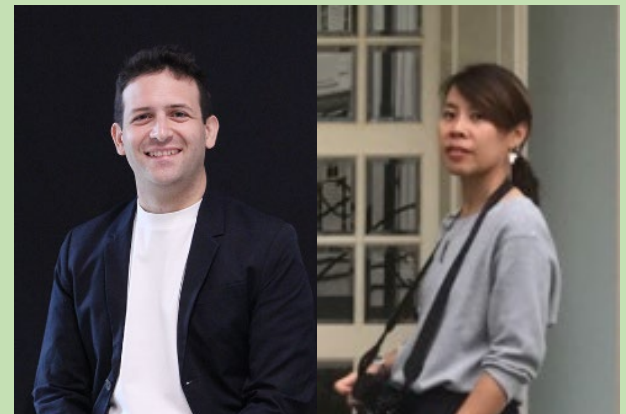
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Study of the Heritage Cultural Landscape of Fanling Golf Course



1. **Cultural Landscape** – Origins & UNESCO World Heritage Convention and Guidelines
2. Origin & Evolution of **Golf Course Design**
3. **Golf Courses as Heritage Cultural Landscape**
 - St Andrews Old Course, Scotland
 - Oakmont Country Club, United States
 - Hirono Golf Club, Japan
4. **Cultural and Natural Significance of Fanling Golf Course**
 - Historical Value
 - Course Design Value
 - Scenic Value
 - Nature Conservation Value
 - Sustainability Value
 - Architectural Value
 - Socio-cultural Value
5. **Comparative Study of Hong Kong Cultural Landscapes with Enhanced Biodiversity**
6. **Anticipated Impacts on Heritage Values from proposed development**

Cultural Landscape

UNESCO Convention 1972 acknowledged heritage significance of Cultural Landscapes

- Comprise the combined works of **nature and man**.
- Illustrate the **evolution of human society and our interaction with the natural environment**.

UNESCO Operational Guidelines 1992 defined three categories of Cultural Landscape

Designed cultural landscape

- Is one that is **created intentionally by man**. This embraces garden and parkland landscapes characteristically constructed **for aesthetic, social and recreational reasons** which are often (but not always) associated with religious or other monumental buildings and ensembles. (Local examples would be: Statue Square, Hong Kong Botanical Garden, Hong Kong Cemetery).

127 cultural landscapes inscribed on the WH List

West Lake Cultural Landscape of Hangzhou 杭州西湖文化景觀 (Left)

Mount Wutai 五台山 (Right)





By definition, Fanling Golf Course is a designed cultural landscape

- Parkland landscape created intentionally for recreation purposes

Origin of Golf and Evolution of Golf Course Design

Original courses on coastal links

St Andrew's in Scotland (1552). Low-key design, natural topography dictates the layout, widely regarded as being the "Home of Golf"

Moving Inland

Parkland courses near urban populations (since late 1800s). Designers create hazards to enhance challenges resulting in different schools of design: penal, strategic, heroic.

Golden Age of Golf

Optimum balance between retaining natural features and designer enhancement in strategic style (late-1800s to 1930s)

Modern Developments

Rapid post-war expansion in U.S. and Asia. Commercial golf course development and overdesign ("Augusta Factor") leading to criticism of unsustainable use of resources (1970 onwards)



Golf Courses as Heritage Cultural Landscapes

World Heritage

127 cultural landscapes inscribed on the WH List, 7 of which include golf courses or parts of golf courses.

- The cultural landscape should, ideally, have statutory protection;
- Have a management plan in place;
- The integrity of the site should not be compromised
- The heritage features of the site should be authentic

St Andrews Links was nominated to be included on the UK's Tentative List for World Heritage Status

National Heritage

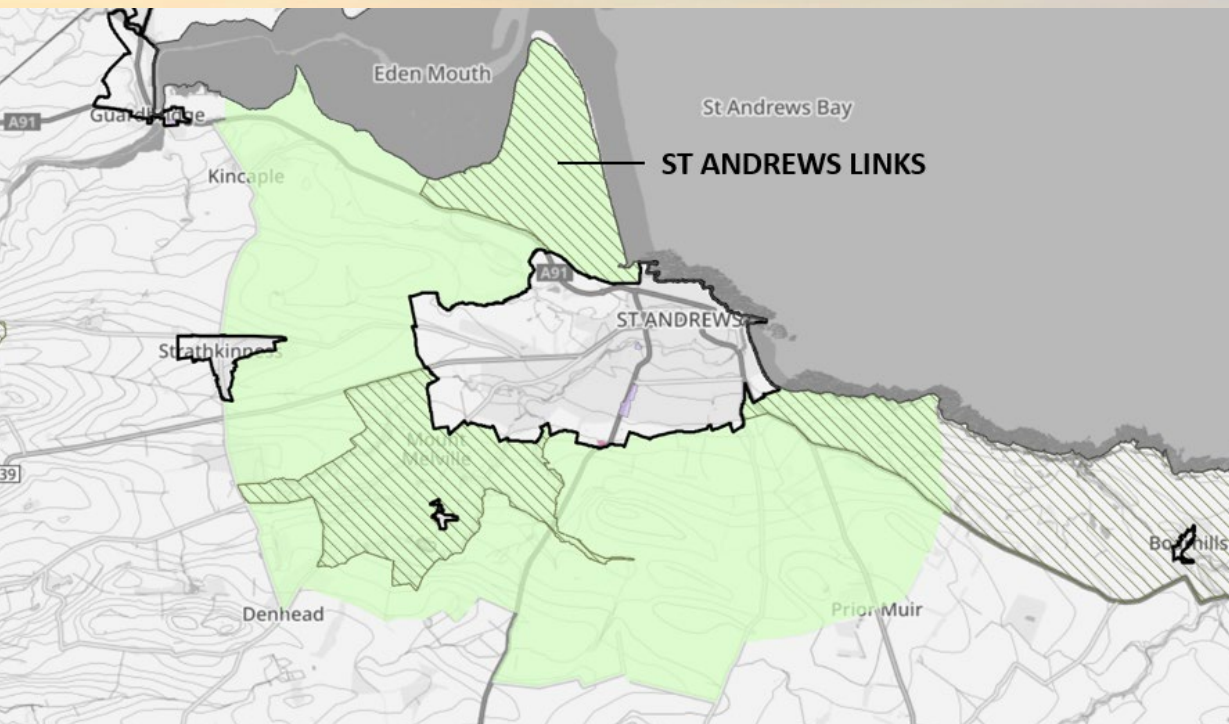
3 case studies:

- Scotland's St Andrews Old Course
- America's Oakmont Golf Club
- Japan's Hirono Golf Club



St Andrews Links, Scotland

St Andrews Links, Scotland (1552)



showing Greenbelt surrounding St Andrews Town conservation area and including the St Andrews Links Landscape of Historic Interest



- Internationally acknowledged as the **‘Home of Golf’**
- Comprises all 4 historic golf courses:
 - Old Course (from mid-1800s)
 - New Course (1895)
 - Jubilee Course (1897)
 - Eden Course (1914)plus
 - Himalayas Putting Course (1867)

St Andrews Links, Scotland (1552)

Designed Landscape of Historic Interest Evaluation Criteria

- **Historical Value**

The finest example of early link golf courses that were first established in Scotland in the late Middle Ages and influenced the design of later courses in the UK and worldwide

- **Course Design Value**

Dictated by the natural topography of the rolling dune landscape. Classic strategic design.

- **Scenic Value**

- **Nature Conservation Value**

- **Sustainability Value**

- **Archaeological Value**

- **Architectural Value**

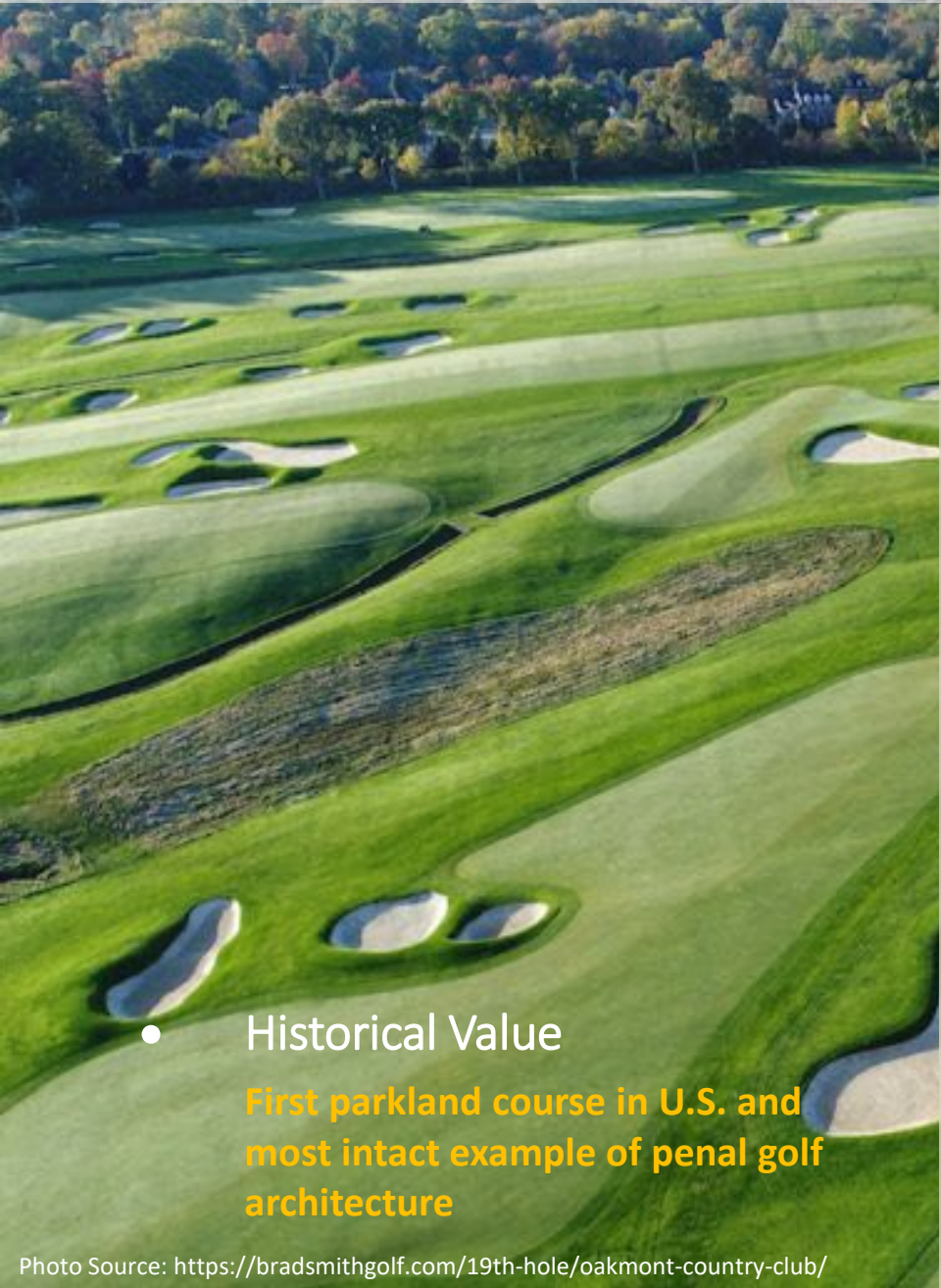
Heritage Status and Statutory Protection

- Nominated for UK's **Tentative List for World Heritage submission**.
- Historic Environment Scotland designated St Andrew Links as a **Designed Landscape of Historic Interest**.
- Public facility, owned by local authority, operated by the St Andrews Links Trust.
- Local authority includes St Andrews Links in **Green Belt Zoning**.

Other Golf Courses in the UK

- Historic England maintains a similar inventory: **Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest**
- Majority of courses included on the Register are protected by being **components of broader historic estate landscapes**.
- Golf courses widely acknowledged to be compatible land uses for **Green Belt zoning**.

Oakmont Country Club, United States (1903)



- **Historical Value**

First parkland course in U.S. and most intact example of penal golf architecture

Heritage Status and Statutory Protection

- Secretary of the Interior and National Park Service designated Oakmont as a **National Historic Landmark (NHL)** acknowledging its status as **the first U.S. parkland golf course**.
- Course **is privately owned but open to the public**.
- Criteria for assessing NHL: Sites where events of national historical significance occurred, outstanding examples of design or construction

Other Golf Courses in the U.S.

- Three other golf courses have been designated as **Historic National Landmarks**, this designation provides effective protection against inappropriate development.
- Also, **National Register of Historic Places includes cultural landscapes**. There are currently **29 golf courses listed**.

Hirono Golf Club, Japan (1932)

- **Historical Value**

- **One of Japan's oldest parkland courses and is considered to be the best in the country**

- **Course Design Value**

- **Considered to be a masterpiece from the Golden Age of golf**

Heritage Status and Statutory Protection

- Designed by **renowned golf architect C.H. Alison** in strategic / heroic style.
- Privately owned. No public access. Course **fully restored** to Alison's design in 2019.
- Widely regarded as a **masterpiece of golf architecture** from the Golden Age
- Course has **no heritage status or statutory protection**

Other Golf Courses in Japan

- Current Japanese legislation for heritage cultural landscapes does not acknowledge golf courses.
- 'Boom / Bust' era of golf development in Japan and influence on commercial golf development throughout Asia contributed to 'unsustainable' image.
- Focused on conserving historic landscapes with long-established cultural heritage

Cultural and Natural Significance of Fanling Golf Course

VALUES

- Historical Value
- Course Design Value
- Scenic Value
- Nature Conservation Value
- Sustainability Value
- Architectural Value
- Local Value
- Socio-cultural value

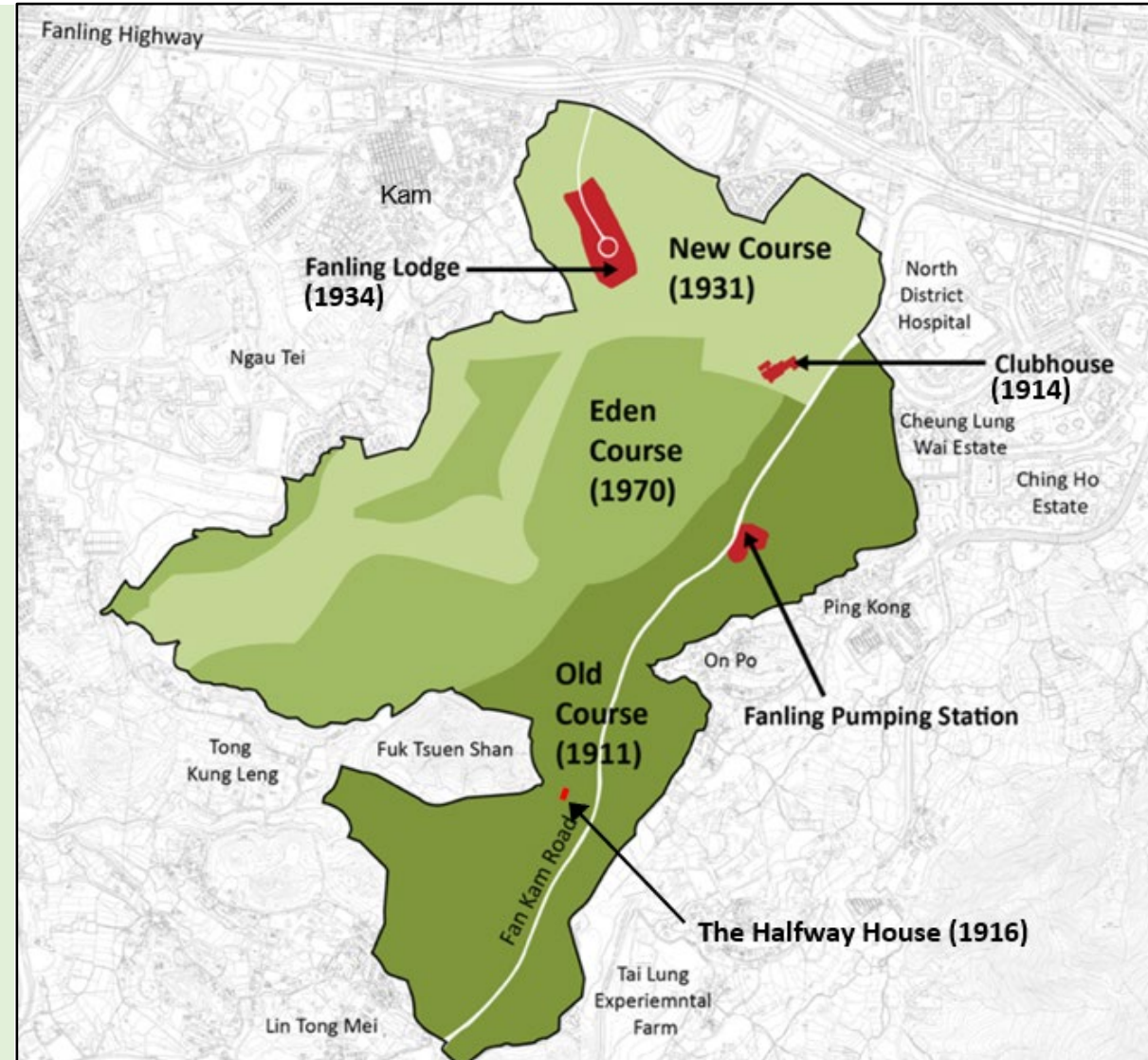
GRADING

- Low local significance
- Medium district or regional significance
- High territory or national significance
- Outstanding international or global significance



Fanling Golf Course (1911)

- **Historical Value : Outstanding** ★★★★★
 - The Old Course is Hong Kong's **first and best example of an 18-hole course dating from the Golden Age of golf**. In combination, the Old, New, and Eden Courses have hosted the Hong Kong Open since 1959 and have played a pivotal role in promoting the sport in Hong Kong and Asia.
 - The 3 graded buildings (Clubhouse, Halfway House and Fanling Lodge) make a valuable contribution to the historical legacy of the cultural landscape
- **Course Design Value : Outstanding** ★★★★★
 - The Old Course is **an authentic and rare surviving example of a course in South-East Asia inspired by the Strategic School**, established by traditional Scottish golf courses like St Andrews.
 - The construction of the Old Course relied primarily on manual labour which resulted in **the retention and incorporation of the natural topography, existing mature trees, and ancestral graves, shrines, and urns into the design**
 - The design of the later New and Eden Courses complement and augment the Old Course, capture the same design spirit and strategic style of the Old Course, creating a unified parkland golf landscape of the highest quality and integrity.



Fanling Golf Course (1911)

- **Scenic Value: High** ★★★★★
 - The Old, New, and Eden Courses were subtly integrated with minimal visual intrusion into the existing terrain.
 - The subsequent tree planting on all three courses has melded and matured to create a richly-wooded parkland landscape that provides visual relief to the increasingly urbanised surroundings.
 - The retention of ancestral graves with the belts of irreplaceable lowland secondary woodland creates a unique visual character and evokes images of the clan village/fengshui landscape context of the boarder cultural landscape



Fanling Golf Course (1911)



- **Nature Conservation Value: Outstanding** ★★★★★
 - Sensitive design and management of the courses has protected Hong Kong’s last remnant of Wild Chinese Swamp Cypress habitat which is listed as critically-endangered worldwide.
 - All 3 courses matured to create a unique lowland, secondary woodland, parkland landscape, covering 45% of the site, supports a wide variety of flora and fauna species that represents a remarkable **enhancement of biodiversity** across the site that is **rare** in Hong Kong.
 - Recognition and promotion of wildlife habitats created and sustained by the golf course in conservation education programmes
- **Sustainability Value: Outstanding** ★★★★★
 - Traditional “Golden Age’ of golf design principles that allowed sensitive integration of the courses into the existing landscape with minimal disturbance to terrain, drainage, and wildlife habits
 - International recognition of HKGC’s world class, sustainable environmental management record with prestigious Audubon certification and Golf Environmental Award

Fanling Golf Course (1911)



- **Architectural Value : Outstanding** ★★★★★
 - The Clubhouse and the Half-way House were integrated with the design of the Old Course, provide a physical and social platform for the golfers and visitors to interact with each other over a century and would continue to evolve in the future. Their value would be compromised if we assessed them as individual building or structure. Indeed, they were strategically designed and positioned to embrace the Course and the landscapes, their locations are capable of giving a magnificent view of the Course, the hills and the plain, being part of landscape.
 - The built heritage resources in the Fanling Golf Course, the Clubhouse (Grade 2), the Halfway House (Grade 3) in the Old Course and the Fanling Lodge (Grade 1) in the New Course. They together **illustrate the spirit of “ the combined works of nature and man” cultural landscape**, that the Course’s architecture and the nature environment form an inseparable relationship.
- **Local value: High** ★★★★★

Recognizing Fanling Golf Course as a historic cultural landscape contributes to the local need to preserve the cultural and historic significance of what has previously been simply considered as natural landscapes. Because it has been continuously used by Club members since 1911, the Fanling Golf Course **remains largely true to the original intent**. It is certainly one of the most **unique and authentic examples of designed landscape heritage still intact and functioning**

Fanling Golf Course (1911)



- **Socio-cultural Value: High** ★★★★★
- As a living heritage, FGC is inseparable from its intangible heritage as it was ascribed various meanings by different groups across Hong Kong society.
- The Hong Kong Golf Club has **one of the largest ladies' section in the world** and the Old Course is the only venue for the Hong Kong Ladies Open, and the ladies' section of the club played an important role in its development.
- As the sport also became popular among the Chinese community in the 1950s, FGC became **an important venue for Chinese amateur groups and fraternities** to teach newcomers about the rules of golf and golfing etiquette.
- With the creation of the **Junior section** in the 1920s, the various championships, and more recently, training activities at Fanling, contributed to make golf an international sport in HK.
- The **co-existence of the historical graves and urns** and the development of the Course represents a unique social and cultural relationship between the Club and the local villagers, with the trust that continued to exist between the Club and the villagers. The fengshui of the graves has been preserved with the original design of the Old Course and forms a unique cultural landscape in HK.

FANLING GOLF COURSE HERITAGE SCORE CARD

HISTORICAL VALUE	OUTSTANDING	★★★★★
COURSE DESIGN VALUE	OUTSTANDING	★★★★★
SCENIC VALUE	HIGH	★★★★
NATURE CONSERVATION VALUE	OUTSTANDING	★★★★★
SUSTAINABILITY VALUE	OUTSTANDING	★★★★★
ARCHITECTURAL VALUE	OUTSTANDING	★★★★★
LOCAL VALUE	HIGH	★★★★
SOCIO-CULTURAL VALUE	HIGH	★★★★



FANLING GOLF COURSE

AUTHENTICITY

- Highly authentic as it maintains and demonstrates the spirit and character of the “Golden Age” design principles of a golf course design. It functions as a golf course without a major break to this day, and exudes the ambience of created and mature landscape serving human use

OUTSTANDING

INTEGRITY

- It is holistically preserved and enhanced with all the original features intact and well maintained .
- The Old Course has not been affected by any recent developments at the site or neighbouring areas and thus fulfilling the UNESCO conditions of integrity as defined by the World Heritage Centre

OUTSTANDING

Comparative Study of Hong Kong Cultural Landscapes with Enhanced Biodiversity

Hong Kong Cemetery, Happy Valley (established 1845)



- A designed cultural landscape managed by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
- **Without a conservation management plan**, the general condition of built and natural heritage resources continues to **decline**

Kadoorie Farm (established 1956)



- A designed and organically evolved cultural landscape managed by the Farm's team of experienced conservation professionals
- With **statutory protection and a well-informed and executed management plan**, the authenticity of the Farm's mission and integrity of the cultural landscape are stable and continue to flourish

Anticipated Impacts on Heritage Values from Proposed Development



- **Historical and Course Design Value: Outstanding → Medium or High**

- The Old Course is **HK's first and best example** of 18-hole course dating from the Golden Age of golf (1890s to 1930s). It is an authentic and rare surviving example of a course in S-E Asia exhibition the design principles of the Strategic School, established by traditional golf courses like St Andrews – the recognised “Home of Golf”
- **The Old Course is integral to the current “Outstanding (internationally significant) historical and course design values for FGC as a whole**, its destruction would inevitably result in materially downgrade these values

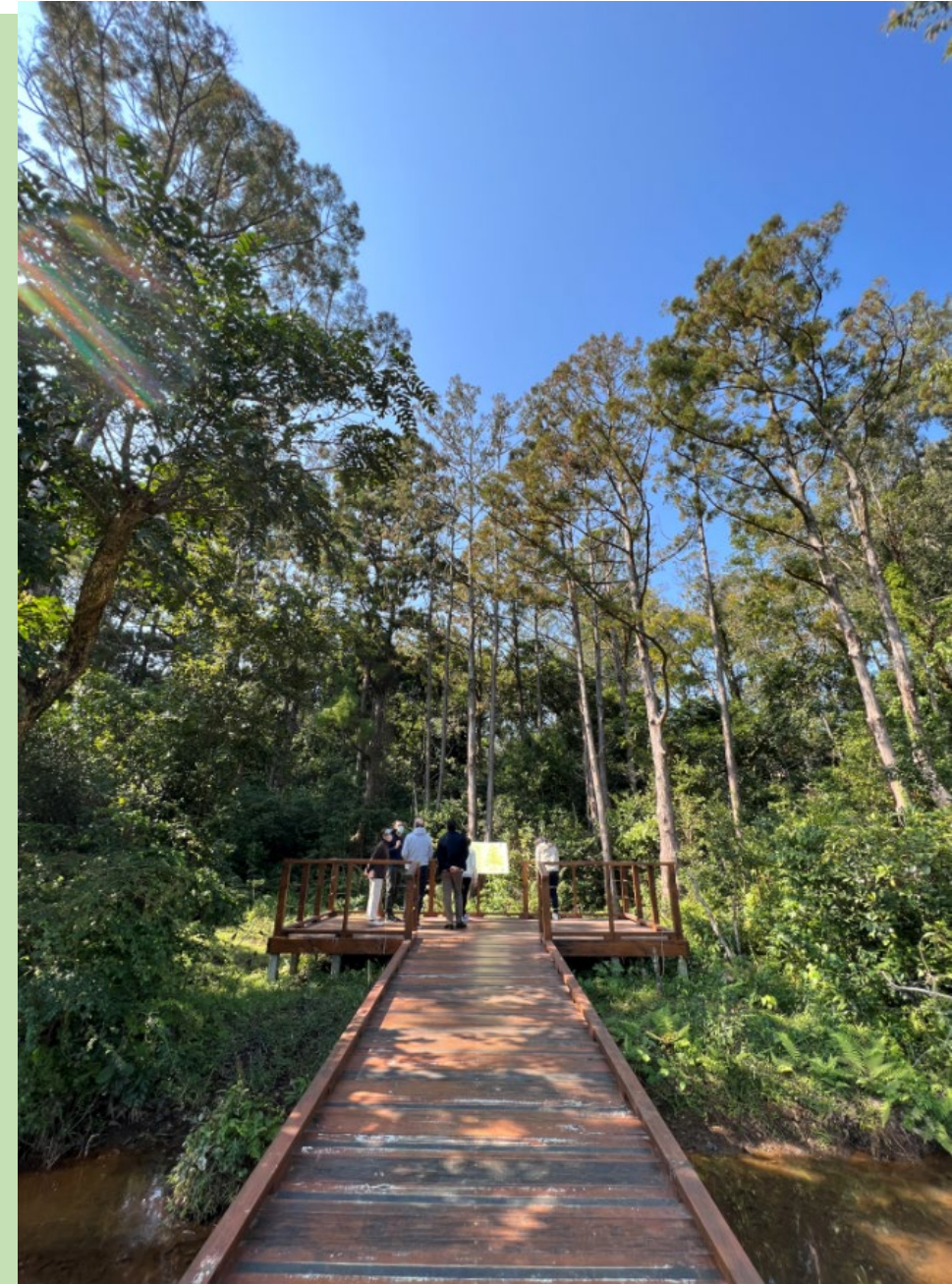


- **Scenic Value: High → Low or Medium**

- The belts of woodland created a unique visual character sympathetic to the clan village/fengshui landscape of the broader cultural landscape. Over time, the mature parkland landscape of FGC has provided visual relief to the increasingly urbanized landscape
- The proposed housing development will **degrade the unique integrity of the golf course** and **create a visual impact that cannot be mitigated or reinstated**

Anticipated Impacts on Heritage Values from Proposed Development

- **Nature Conservation Value: Outstanding → Medium**
- Any loss of the unique and irreplaceable golf course parkland landscape to urban development will result in a **loss of biodiversity** and would be a serious and irretrievable loss for the wider region of the N.T, and the planned Northern Metropolis.
- Destruction of a portion of the Old Course, including felling over 1,000 mature trees, will **degrade adjacent habitats**, particularly from construction works in short term and from noise and light disturbance in long term
- **Sustainability Value: Outstanding → Medium or High**
- HKGC had been pioneering in HK for decades for sustainable environmental management for the golf course.
- To allow the loss of a portion of the Old Course to housing development would be **to disregard and undermine the world-class sustainability model** applied so effectively at the FGC. The model reflects UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goals – **striking a balance of 3 aspects of sustainability - economic, social and environmental**



Anticipated Impacts on Heritage Values from Proposed Development



- **Architectural Value:**
Outstanding → Medium

- The loss of the portion of the Old Course would discontinue the association of the built heritages and their original landscape (decontextualised) and eventually destroy the integrity of the whole designed cultural landscape.
- Degrade the original role as being the built heritage resources that synthesize with the natural resources which all making FGC as a combined works of nature and man

- **Local value: High → Medium**

- Very few historic landscapes in HK can be said to have preserved their original character and used as 'living heritage'. Other examples of designed landscapes such as the Tiger Balm Gardens, have been scarified to housing development, the Haw Par Mansion leaving behind decontextualised
- FGC has remined largely true to its original intent since 1911, the partial demolition of the Old Course will irreversibly damage its uniqueness and authenticity

- **Socio-cultural value: High → Low**

- The Club's unique historical relationship with indigenous villagers is intrinsically linked to the Old Course would be damaged.
- Although the second half of the Old Course might remain intact, it would lose its intangible heritage significance while the history of the Old Course as a whole would have lost its status of the "oldest 18-hole championship course in Asia and corresponding landscape. The Old Course is the only golf course in HK that can host a major international event in the summer months

SUMMARY OF ANTICIPATED IMPACTS ON HERITAGE VALUES FROM PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

★ denotes anticipated minimum loss in value grading

	BEFORE	AFTER	
Historical	Outstanding	Medium to High	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Course Design	Outstanding	Medium to High	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Scenic	High	Low to Medium	★ ★ ★ ★
Nature Conservation	Outstanding	Medium	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Sustainability	Outstanding	Medium to High	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Architectural	Outstanding	Medium	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Local	High	Medium	★ ★ ★ ★
Socio-cultural	High	Low	★ ★ ★ ★

Conclusion

- Interpret FGC as a historic cultural landscape, and acknowledge its true heritage value
 - It demonstrates the importance of synthesising built and natural heritage resources to understand the 'combined works of nature and man' as a designed cultural landscape
 - FGC is not just an historic, world-class golf facility, it has evolved to become a wildlife sanctuary of local, regional, and international importance. It is one of Hong Kong's rare examples of a cultural landscape that has experienced **a sustained increase in biodiversity** as a result of human intervention. It is rare to find an **authentic and intact heritage site** in HK, that has been in **operation for over a century, and has been maintained sustainably.**
 - Proactive, sustainable environmental management has played an integral role in protecting the authenticity and integrity of the site. It is **a world-class role model** which Hong Kong should be proud of. This should be acknowledged and protected in perpetuity by statutory means through an appropriate land use zoning development.
 - Without the establishment of the golf courses, it is highly unlikely that the critically- endangered grove of Wild Chinese Swamp Cypress would have survived, or the wooded parkland landscape would have flourished to become a sanctuary for wildlife.

Conclusion

- **Significant cultural landscape in urbanised HK, N.T.**
 - Heritage resources of biodiverse cultural landscapes like FGC, as well as **Kadorine Farm, Mai Po Marshes**, etc should be treasured, protected and nurtured individually as well as collectively.
 - Experience with **successful local conservation management schemes** like the Mai Po Ramsar Site & The UNESCO Sustainable Development Guidelines (SDG) provide helpful pointers in how to achieve it.
- **Balance economic, social and environmental goals**
 - Urban development is a necessary consequence of economic sustainability but it should not result in a net loss of quality of life for society (social sustainability) or degradation of biodiversity (environmental sustainability)
 - FGC upholds the key dimensions of sustainable development – **economic, social and environmental**, through nature-based solutions and emphasise on ecological restoration, demonstrated commitment to social-economic and communal development (development of conservation education programmes) to safeguard the living cultural landscape

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an extremely high heritage significance
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