

For information
On 25 October 2004

Legislative Council Panel on Economic Services

Central Police Station, Victoria Prison and the Former Central Magistracy – A Heritage and Tourism Project

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to update Members on the progress of the heritage tourism project at the Central Police Station, Victoria Prison and the former Central Magistracy (the Project).

Background

2. On 28 April 2003, the joint Panel on Economic Services and Security of the Legislative Council (LegCo) was briefed on the proposed implementation framework of the Project. Members indicated general support for the implementation framework. We then proceeded with the preparation of the tender document for the Project based on the proposed implementation framework, taking into account comments received.

3. In June 2004, the Government received a proposal led by the Hotung family and others to develop the site into a visual arts academy and related facilities based on a non-profit-making arrangement. We have also received other views on the Project recently including those from the Central and Western District Council and the Central Police Station Heritage Taskforce. The Government is now reviewing the implementation framework for the Project.

Objective of the Project

4. The Government's primary objective of the Project is to preserve, restore and develop the historic site into a heritage tourism facility for overseas visitors and local residents to enjoy. We intend to award the Project through an open competitive process.

Preservation Requirements

5. The Government is fully committed to preserving our cultural heritage. For this Project, stringent preservation requirements and guidelines have been worked out in consultation with the Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB), with mandatory requirements on preservation of historic buildings, restrictions on building height for new building(s) and maximum gross floor area. The preservation requirements will form part of the tender conditions to ensure that the historic setting and the integrity of the site are well preserved and to avoid any inappropriate or non-reversible alternations/additions which would undermine its historic value.

6. As advised by AAB, all the 17 historic buildings and historic walls at the site will be preserved in-situ. A small number of non-historic buildings including offices, storage rooms and temporary structures built during the post-War period may be demolished with the approval of the Antiquities Authority (i.e. the Secretary for Home Affairs). A gist of the preservation requirements is at **Annex A**.

7. Under the proposed framework, the tender assessment will be a two-stage process, where tenders will be screened for conformity with the mandatory heritage preservation requirements. To pass the first stage of assessment, tenders must meet the mandatory preservation requirements, i.e. tenders will not be further evaluated unless they have satisfied these mandatory heritage preservation requirements. Hence, the objective of putting heritage preservation as an overriding factor can be achieved. With such a carefully devised implementation framework, the historic value of the site will be properly preserved, whilst providing enough flexibility for a sensitive restoration and development of the site into a world class tourism facility.

The Evaluation Framework and Procedures

8. The current weighting for premium versus qualitative aspects of proposals is set at 40% and 60% respectively. In response to views received, we are reviewing the weighting ratio. In assessing the tender proposals, qualitative aspects relating to heritage conservation; technical, environmental and traffic issues; as well as community and tourism benefits, will be given more weight than revenue to Government.

9. There have also been suggestions for non-profit-making proposals to be given equal consideration vis-a-vis commercial ones as well as calls for non-profit use only. We consider that as long as a proper balance on the weighting regarding the premium and qualitative aspects is struck, a proposal which is both financially sustainable and beneficial to the community as a whole would be selected. We believe there should be no restriction on profit or non-profit-making proposals.

10. An assessment panel comprising representatives of concerned bureaux and departments including the Home Affairs Bureau, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department and the Tourism Commission will be set up to assess proposals based on the marking scheme approved by the Central Tender Board. Representatives of the AAB and the Hong Kong Tourism Board will serve as non-scoring members to advise on heritage aspect and tourism benefits respectively of the proposals received.

11. We have also received views regarding the need for better communication and public participation during tendering stage and the operational stage after the award. We are reviewing the most appropriate ways to address these concerns.

Public Consultation

12. We have consulted the community in preparing for the tender on the CPS Project and have actively solicited views from all relevant parties, including this Panel and the Central and Western District Council. We conducted a public forum in March 2004 to solicit public views, with more than 100 participants including the professionals, academics and the local residents. During the consultation on the tendering arrangements, the key concerns raised by the community were preservation requirements, traffic and environmental considerations, public access to the site and local involvement in monitoring the project. All these concerns will be taken into account in finalizing the tendering arrangements.

Way Forward

13. We are finalizing the tender arrangements and programme of this Project in light of the comments received. We will continue to listen to views from all parties interested in the Project with an open mind and will endeavour to take these views into account in taking forward the Project.

Tourism Commission
Economic Development and Labour Bureau
October 2004

**Gist of Preservation Requirements for
Central Police Station Compound**

The Central Police Station, former Central Magistracy and Victoria Prison were declared as monuments under the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (Cap. 53) on 8 September 1995. A permit must first be obtained from the Antiquities Authority (i.e. Secretary for Home Affairs) before carrying out any works within the declared monument sites.

2. The Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO) has prepared a set of Preservation Requirements after consultation with the Antiquities Advisory Board in order to preserve the historic character and integrity of the original layout of the Historic Site so that its future heritage value will not be undermined by inappropriate or non-reversible alterations or additions.

Historic Buildings, Structures and Walls

3. The entire compound comprises 27 buildings and structures. With reference to their historical significance, there are 17 Historic Buildings which are classified into two types:

- (a) Type 'A': Historic Building must be conserved externally and internally so as to maintain the historic integrity of the building; and
- (b) Type 'B': Historic Building must be conserved externally. To allow certain flexibility in re-using the building, internally it can be altered, provided that the historic architectural features, such as doors, windows, staircases and balustrades, identified by AMO shall be conserved.

4. The historic walls of the compound, comprising retaining, boundary and division walls are also classified into two types:

- (a) Type 'A': Walls of high historical significance must be conserved in-situ so as to maintain the historic integrity of the entire compound; and
- (b) Type 'B': Walls of moderate historical value should be conserved in-situ as far as possible, although some openings, e.g. for emergency vehicle access, and alterations may be permitted by the Antiquities Authority.

..... Location of different types of historic buildings, structures and walls is shown on the attached plan.

5. No alterations or additions which will adversely affect the structural stability of any of the historic buildings shall be permitted. No alterations or additions should be made to original load-bearing walls and other structural elements. All

proposed partitioning, ceilings as well as alterations and additions should be constructed and carried out in a reversible manner.

6. The treatment to all buildings and structures on the site, both new and existing, shall be “reversible” and should enhance their style and appearance in order that the historic character of the Historic Site will be properly conserved.

Non-historic Buildings, Structures and Walls

7. As the site is already crowded with many buildings and structures, the later added non-historic buildings and structures are presently obstructing pedestrian circulation and blocking the historic building façade within the site, thus detracting its historic integrity. The demolition of the non-historic buildings and structures are allowed in order to create more open spaces for visual and circulation improvement and landscape enhancement. However, any proposed demolition and/ or replacement of buildings will require prior approval of the Antiquities Authority.

Location of New Development and Height Restriction

8. Construction of new buildings is restricted to Upper Platform Area (Victoria Prison) while Type A and Type B Historic Buildings within the area shall be strictly preserved. No construction is allowed on the Lower Platform Area within the Central Police Station.

9. Any new developments within the Upper Platform Area are imposed with a maximum height restriction of 77 mPD. The existing highest building on the Upper Platform Area, i.e. D Hall, is 70.1 mPD while the ground level of the main courtyard is 55.7 mPD.

10. The two existing courtyards situated on the Upper and Lower Platform Areas (i.e. the Exercise Yard of the Victoria Prison and the Parade Ground of the Central Police Station) shall be preserved. No buildings or structures shall be constructed or erected on the courtyards except those temporary buildings or structures which in the opinion of the Antiquities Authority are essential. However, subject to the approval of the Antiquities Authority, underground development might be permitted beneath the two courtyards respectively as well as beneath any new building, provided that no adverse structural impact is caused to the foundations of any historic buildings or historic walls.

Conservation Principles

11. The Purchaser should respect the principles contained in the following international documents on heritage conservation: (a) *Venice Charter* (International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites), (b) *Burra Charter* (The Australia ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance), and (c) *Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China* (China ICOMOS).

12. The Purchaser shall at his own expense submit a detailed Conservation Plan for the Historic Site to the Antiquities Authority for approval before commencement of any building work on the Historic Site. The Conservation Plan shall include:

- (a) a statement of significance on the heritage value of the Historic Site;
- (b) a survey on the existing condition of the Historic Site;
- (c) a survey showing the cultural landscape and changes throughout the history of the site, including the history of interventions and adaptations to the Historic Site, particularly the Historic Buildings and the Historic Walls;
- (d) a heritage impact assessment to identify the possible direct and indirect impacts on the Historic Site caused by the new development; and
- (e) management and maintenance policy and guidelines for the future conservation of the Historic Site.

13. To enable the local residents and tourists to have a better understanding on the original usage of the Historic Site, the Purchaser is recommended to set up a “Heritage Corner” to display and interpret its development history.

Antiquities and Monuments Office
Leisure and Cultural Services Department
October 2004

中區警署建築群－文物旅遊發展

Heritage Tourism Development at the Central Police Station Compound

1. Headquarters Block (總部大樓) (1919)
2. Block A (A座) (early 1910s)
3. Block B (B座) (early 1910s)
4. Block C (C座) (early 1910s)
5. Block D (D座) (early 1910s)
6. Barrack Block (營房大樓) (1864; 3/F-1905) together with the attached Gateway (門廊)
7. Sanitary Block (衛生樓) (post 1948)
8. Stable Block (馬廄) (1925)
9. Former Central Magistracy (前中央裁判司署) (1914)
10. A Hall (A倉) (1945)
11. B Hall (B倉) (1914)
12. C Hall (East Wing) C倉(東翼) (1914)
13. C Hall (West Wing) C倉(西翼) (1914)
14. D Hall (West Wing) D倉(西翼) (c. 1860s)
15. D Hall (East Wing) D倉(東翼) (c. 1860s)
16. E Hall (E倉) (1914)
17. Watch Tower (Bauhinia House) 更樓 (紫荊樓)(c. 1860s)

