

立法會 *Legislative Council*

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Panel on Economic Services

Background brief on the proposed redevelopment of the Central Police Station Compound into a heritage tourism attraction

Purpose

This paper sets out the background of the proposed redevelopment of the Central Police Station, Victoria Prison and the former Central Magistracy (the Site) into a heritage tourism attraction and summarizes the major views and concerns expressed by Members at previous meetings of the Legislative Council.

Background

2. There has been increasing public demand for more to be done to preserve heritage assets in Hong Kong. Given budgetary and other constraints on Government, the Administration has adopted a new approach to preserve and make full use of the heritage assets. Under the new approach, the Government will engage private sector resources in projects with commercial potential. The Administration is of the view that the new approach will help inject new ideas and a new dynamism into the process to convert heritage assets in Hong Kong to beneficial use. It will also enable the Government to focus its resources on preservation work which does not offer a potential for private sector participation.

3. The Site was gazetted as monuments under the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (Cap. 53) in 1995. In April 2003, the Government announced details of the plan to involve the private sector to preserve, restore and develop the Site into a heritage tourism attraction (the Project). It was estimated that the cost for annual regular maintenance (at \$5.4 million and \$5.6 million respectively for 2001/02 and 2002/03) could be saved by Government upon implementation of the Project.

Implementation framework

4. According to the Administration, the Project would have to achieve the dual objective of preserving and restoring the Site, and developing it as a heritage tourism facility. The implementation framework would need to guard against imposing non-essential requirements which would erode the financial viability of the Project, given that there are a number of constraints on development of the Site that might limit the commercial development potential of the Project. Accordingly, the following implementation framework was proposed in April 2003:

- (a) ***Approach to Disposal of the Site*** – The Project will be awarded in the form of a land grant through an open competitive process. The successful proponent will be granted the Site on the normal 50-year term land lease;
- (b) ***Mandatory Requirements*** – Proposals would need to meet two key requirements, namely the project proponent's demonstrated financial capability to carry through the Project, and compliance with preservation requirements;
- (c) ***Preservation Requirements*** – The mandatory preservation requirements would be kept to the minimum required to reflect and preserve the heritage value of the site, leaving as much flexibility as possible to the future Project proponent to take forward the development concept. There will be specific requirements on the future developer to preserve a number of buildings which are considered to be of historic significance, with flexibility to preserve the facades only for some of the buildings. There will also be flexibility to remove non-historic structures;
- (d) ***Assessment of Proposals*** – Proposals received will be assessed in accordance with four main categories of criteria, namely heritage preservation; technical, environmental and traffic issues; economic and tourism benefits; and payment to Government, in the form of land premium.

In the light of the objectives of preservation and the promotion of heritage tourism, and the constraints which would limit the viability of the project, the Government will attach a higher weighting to the non-premium aspects of proposals than to land premium in the assessment of proposals. The two aspects will be assigned a relative weighting of 60% and 40% respectively.

Proposals will have to meet mandatory requirements on preservation and secure a minimum passing score in respect of the criterion on heritage preservation. A detailed marking scheme will be approved by the Central Tender Board (CTB) before tender. The Administration will also attach to the tender document information on the marking scheme to provide transparency and to ensure better understanding of the objectives of the exercise;

- (e) **Assessment Panel** – An assessment panel comprising representatives of concerned bureaux and departments will be set up to assess proposals based on the marking scheme approved by the CTB. Representatives from the Antiquities Advisory Board and the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) will be invited to join the Assessment Panel as non-scoring members to advise on the heritage aspects and tourism benefits respectively of any proposals received; and
- (f) **Implementation, future operation and maintenance** – The successful proponent will be responsible for preserving, restoring, repairing and renovating the Site and the buildings, and will be responsible for the future management, operation and maintenance of the proposed development. The successful proponent will also need to complete all necessary statutory procedures as required under relevant legislation, including the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (Cap. 53), the Town Planning Ordinance (Cap. 131), the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance (Cap. 499) and the Buildings Ordinance (Cap. 123) before beginning construction works on site.

Consultation with Panels

5. The Panel held a joint meeting with the Security Panel on 28 April 2003 to receive a briefing by the Administration on the proposed implementation of the Project and reprovisioning arrangements for the existing users of the Site. Members in general were in support of the initiative to broaden the range of tourist attractions in Hong Kong. They however were worried about the commercial viability of the Project and urged the Administration to leave as much flexibility as possible to future Project proponent to take forward the development concept within the constraint of preservation requirements. Some members also asked the Administration to hold an international design competition for the development of the Site.

Public consultation

6. According to the Administration, a Workshop on “Heritage Tourism Development at the Central Police Station Compound” was held on 13 March 2004 to gauge community aspiration and sentiment on issues concerning the Project. Over 100 representatives from various fields attended the Workshop. Gist of points raised at the Workshop is summarized at the Summary Report prepared by the Administration in **Annex A**.

7. Recently, there were comments that the financial gain of the Project was over-emphasized and might outweigh the benefits of the Project to the community. Some deputations were of the view that the selection criteria for future proponent should be reviewed to reflect the community aspirations for the future of the heritage buildings prior to tendering. Some deputations also requested the Administration to put the tendering process on hold and reconsider the option of having a charitable Trust to develop/run commercial and/or non-commercial uses in the Site.

8. In response to comments on the proposed heritage tourism development at the Central Police Station, the Administration issued a press release on 20 September 2004. The Administration reiterated its commitment to ensure that the historic buildings on the Central Police Compound will be properly preserved as it takes forward the project. A copy of the press release is in **Annex B**.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
19 October 2004

Workshop on “Heritage Tourism Development at the Central Police Station (CPS) Compound” on 13 March 2004

Gist of Points raised at the Workshop

I. Heritage Conservation

(A) Principles

In general, it is agreed that the Site is of high historic value and should be carefully preserved. Other views include:

- development parameters, preservation requirements and guidelines should be set out clearly to enable project proponents to focus on designs on adaptive use of the historic buildings
- the responsibility of future maintenance and management of the historic buildings should also be clearly spelt out
- a good conservation plan is required
- new developments should be compatible/sympathetic/in harmony with the Site socially, culturally, politically and environmentally
- international standards on heritage preservation should be followed

(B) Needs and Wants

The heritage tourism development concept for this Site is a good one and is widely supported. Other views include:

- a balance should be struck between heritage preservation and tourism promotion
- high-rise buildings are not preferred
- maximum flexibility should be allowed for creativity in designs
- there are concerns that cultural heritage management principles and commercial consideration may undergo changes through the tenancy period of 50 years

- the development should allow generation of revenue to balance the cost for heritage preservation

(C) Suggestions and Solutions

Suggestions put forward are diversified. These include:

- reviewing options on access to the Site
- allowing flexibility in design
- promoting flexibility for innovative new development for taller buildings along the edge of Chancery Lane
- examining innovative ways to achieve commercial viability, without compromising heritage preservation
- linking the Site with another site of government land with more development potentials in the tender arrangement

II. Future Uses of the Historic Buildings

(A) Principles

The major concern on future uses is that it should be accessible by the general public. Other views include:

- as the Compound belongs to everyone in Hong Kong, it should be open for the community's use, i.e. for appreciation and enjoyment by the local citizens as well as tourists
- future uses should also respect the historic value and atmosphere/environment of the Compound and be compatible, connectible and synergetic with the neighbouring tourist and entertainment development, the food and beverages facilities around Lan Kwai Fong, SoHo and Hollywood Road in particular
- commercial viability and sustainability of the development are also major concern
- monetary return of the Project should not be over-emphasized

- intangible benefits including social, cultural and educational merits to the community and the next generation should be taken into account

(B) Needs and Wants

The need to preserve and develop the Site for a mix of commercial, cultural and educational use is generally agreed. Other views include:

- flexibility should be allowed in the change of future use of the Site given that the tenancy period of 50 years is a long one
- public space should be made available/ maintained at the Site for cultural purposes, eg. display of art/ historical items, venue for exhibitions, etc.
- public views/ community participation on the Project are important

(C) Suggestions and Solutions

Suggestions include:

- establishing a prison museum showcasing the history of the prison buildings or a museum exhibiting the colonial judiciary history of Hong Kong
- using the Magistracy building for exhibition of contemporary Asian art
- setting up of a “Sun Yat Sen Historic Path Exhibition Centre”
- connecting the Site with the Sun Yat Sen Walking Trail nearby
- maintaining the Central Police Station Report Centre for educational purpose
- developing a 5-star hotel
- exploring the development of underground walkway connecting the Site with the nearby MTR station
- arranging annual parade for fun
- preserving the lower part of the Compound while allowing flexibility for new developments on the upper platform of the Site

- underground development can be considered

III. Traffic and Environmental Issues

(A) Principles

The consensus is the impact on the traffic condition and the environment surrounding the Site would need to be carefully considered. Views include:

- new development should be carefully considered in terms of its traffic impact and the traffic improvement measures being put forward
- environmental impacts, including adverse impact on air quality and noise nuisances, of the development including those to be generated during the construction period would need to be carefully avoided
- trees within the Site should be preserved

(B) Needs and Wants

Views expressed:

- traffic impact assessment should be conducted
- to alleviate the heavy traffic surrounding the Site, consideration should be given to provide more access/ entrances at the Site
- to link the Site with the Mid-Level Escalator and to encourage visitors to make good use of the existing pedestrian links with connection to public transport at Central
- plans should be worked out to minimize the impact on the environment and traffic during the construction period while the Site is still being occupied

(C) Suggestions and Solutions

Suggestions received:

- traffic control scheme should be developed and implemented to ensure smooth traffic flow
- subways can be built for pedestrians to reduce traffic volume

- linkage to the Mid-Level Escalator can be considered
- promote total pedestrian traffic
- road widening works can be carried out to improve the traffic condition around the Site
- more planting and greenery work can be done to improve the environment

March 2004

Press Release

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Government committed to preserving Central Police Station

In response to recent comments on the proposed heritage tourism development at Central Police Station, the Government today (September 20) reiterated its commitment to ensure that the historic buildings on the Central Police Station Compound will be properly preserved as it takes forward this project.

"Preserving the historic buildings has always been Government's primary objective. 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 fully taken into account in finalising the tendering arrangements," a Government spokesman said.

The spokesman pointed out that the Antiquities Advisory Board has been fully consulted on the preservation requirements and their advice has been included in the draft tender documents. The Government will ensure that all 17 historic buildings at the Central Police Station site will be protected in accordance with the relevant legislation.

Responding to comments that financial gain is over-emphasised and may outweigh the benefits of the project to the community, the spokesman stressed that in assessing the tender proposals, the majority of the assessment criteria will focus on the qualitative aspects of the proposals, including heritage conservation; environmental and traffic considerations; as well as community and tourism benefits. He explained that premium will be relevant only when proposals have been determined to conform to the mandatory heritage preservation requirements, i.e. the proposals will not be evaluated at all unless they have satisfied those requirements.

The spokesman pointed out that the Government has widely consulted the public including the Legislative Council and the Central and Western District Council on the implementation framework, including the assessment criteria, for the project. A workshop was held in March 2004 to gather views from the public on the project.

As regards the open letter to the Chief Executive from the Ho family, the spokesman stressed that the Government is open to views on how this project should proceed. "We are finalising the arrangement for disposal of the site by way of an open and competitive process and will take all views expressed, including the Ho family's, into account," the spokesman said.

"We have encouraged the Ho family group to continue to take an interest in the project and participate in the tender. However, we felt that it is not appropriate to reverse this process and dispose of the land by direct grant to one group."

"We will continue to listen to views from all parties interested in the project," he said.

End/Monday, September 20, 2004

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