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Panel on Home Affairs

Subcommittee on Heritage Conservation

**Background brief on conservation issues relating to
Nga Tsin Wai Village, Wan Chai Market and the market area
at Tai Yuen Street and Cross Street**

Purpose

This paper gives an account of the past discussions held by the Legislative Council (LegCo) on conservation issues relating to Nga Tsin Wai Village, Wan Chai Market and the market area at Tai Yuen Street and Cross Street.

Background

Nga Tsin Wai Village

2. The Nga Tsin Wai Village project is one of the 25 urban renewal projects announced by the former Land Development Corporation (LDC) (now the Urban Renewal Authority). The Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB) was consulted in 1994 regarding the proposed redevelopment of the village by LDC. After deliberation, AAB did not object to the redevelopment of the village on the grounds that most of the houses there had undergone alterations and were no longer in their original form, the walls and the moat were all gone, and only the layout of the village remained unchanged. A brief on Nga Tsin Wai Village prepared by the Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO) is in **Appendix I** for members' reference.
3. AAB further discussed the issue of Nga Tsin Wai Village in 1999 and 2000, and recommended that the relics identified in the village should be salvaged and reused as far as possible in the future development, and that the developers concerned should be required to produce detailed cartographic and photographic records of the village.
4. Nga Tsin Wai Village has been included as a redevelopment project by the Urban Renewal Authority (URA). According to URA, in determining the strategies and the scope of work for the redevelopment project, a number of

factors, including the importance of heritage conservation, will be taken into consideration.

Wan Chai Market and the market area at Tai Yuen Street and Cross Street

5. Wan Chai Market is located at the junction of Wan Chai Road and Queen's Road East. It was built in 1937 and has been accorded Grade III historical building status. Wan Chai Market is included as part of URA's H9 project covering three sites, i.e. the new Wan Chai Market (the new market) with residential development on top and the adjacent MLC Tower, a residential building opposite the new market, and new residential properties to be provided at the site of the existing Wan Chai Market after its demolition. Apart from replacing the existing Wan Chai Market, the new market will also be used for accommodating the licensed hawkers conducting on-street trading along Tai Yuen Street and Cross Street, in order to improve the environmental hygiene condition and the traffic problems of the area. According to the Administration, the former Wan Chai District Board and Urban Council had expressed support for the development project before it was gazetted in 1995.

6. Hawker stalls at Tai Yuen Street and Cross Street have formed an open-air bazaar with a long history in Wan Chai, where a variety of dry and wet goods are sold. It is a landmark of the district and attracts a lot of local and foreign visitors to shop there.

Discussions held by LegCo on Nga Tsin Wai Village

7. During the motion debate on "Conservation of monuments and heritage" at the Council meeting on 24 March 2004, Hon CHAN Kwok-keung proposed that as most of the titles to ownership of Nga Tsin Wai Village had been purchased by developers, the Government might offer some economic incentives to encourage the developers to preserve the outlook of the village, e.g. by allowing the transfer of development right or plot ratio. He further said that concern groups had suggested the development of Nga Tsin Wai Village into a heritage trail with hostels and shops, and the profits made could be shared with the developers. Moreover, festive events and celebrations might be held at the site on particular occasions for the participation of local and foreign visitors.

8. In response to Hon CHAN Yuen-han's enquiry on what would be done by the Administration to preserve monuments and heritage (including Nga Tsin Wai Village) at the Council meeting on 26 April 2006, the Secretary for Home Affairs said that the Wong Tai Sin District Council passed a resolution in November 2005 requesting that the redevelopment of Nga Tsin Wai Village should be expeditiously carried out, with the existing gate house, the embedded stone plaque and the Tin Hau Temple in the village to be preserved, and that the District Council should be consulted on the planning for future

redevelopment. The Home Affairs Bureau and AMO were keeping a close watch on the progress of the redevelopment of Nga Tsin Wai Village, and had urged URA to take account of AAB's views and advice when undertaking redevelopment planning, as well as to engage in a detailed programme of study of the village with cartographic and photographic records produced. These would ensure that the historical relics of the village could be preserved properly.

9. During the motion debate on "Review on urban renewal strategy" at the Council meeting on 17 May 2006, Hon CHAN Yuen-han requested the Administration to have regard for the history and community culture unique to Nga Tsin Wai Village and preserve the whole village. Moreover, it should listen to the aspirations of the villagers and address the issues concerning compensation and rehousing as soon as possible.

10. At the Council meeting on 7 June 2006, Hon CHAN Yuen-han raised a written question on the latest progress of the "Redevelopment project of Nga Tsin Wai Village". A copy of the question and reply is in **Appendix II** for members' reference.

Follow-up on the case of hawkers at Tai Yuen Street and Cross Street objecting to relocation to the new market by the Complaints Division of LegCo

11. This case has been taken up by LegCo Members since March 2006. Affected pitch hawkers at Tai Yuen Street and Cross Street met with Members on 16 March 2006 regarding their objection to the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD)'s plan to relocate hawkers at the two streets to the new market, involving a total of 158 hawker pitches. LegCo Members held a case conference with representatives of the Administration and the Hong Kong Tourism Board on 27 March 2006.

12. In its reply to the Complaints Division in May 2006, FEHD advised that after thorough consideration of the views of LegCo Members, the Wan Chai District Council (WCDC), affected hawkers and relevant Government departments, it was considered that all the 86 fixed hawker pitches at Tai Yuen Street (South) and Cross Street (East) should be relocated, so that with the intake of residents for URA's new residential development, Tai Yuen Street (South) and Cross Street (East) could be reopened to traffic in order to avoid heavy congestion in the area. As for some 80 fixed hawker pitches at Tai Yuen Street (North) and Cross Street (West), no relocation was required. According to the Administration, the revised arrangement could largely achieve the objective of retaining the open-air bazaar as far as possible while balancing the needs of various parties. Moreover, WCDC had indicated its support for the new option.

13. At the second case conference held with representatives of the Administration on 15 November 2006, Members urged the Administration to provide relevant data and review the traffic arrangements in the area of Tai Yuen Street/Cross Street/Wan Chai Road/Queen's Road East. Members requested the Administration to consider taking appropriate measures so that the open-air bazaar at Tai Yuen Street and Cross Street could be retained. They also requested the Administration to seriously consider the views of the affected hawkers and local residents, and to conduct a comprehensive review of the relocation plan.

14. The Administration responded in January 2007 that in the light of the traffic impact assessment further conducted for the H9 project, it was considered that if Tai Yuen Street (South) and Cross Street (East) were not opened to traffic, the anticipated additional traffic demands could not be met. As a result, traffic congestion would often occur at Tai Yuen Street (South), and the congestion might even extend to Queen's Road East and the roads nearby.

15. At the third case conference held with representatives of the Administration on 16 May 2007, Members attending the conference disagreed with the plan to relocate part of the open-air bazaar. Members were of the view that the Administration should not ignore the strong calls from members of the public for the preservation of the open-air bazaar and traditional culture as well as the promotion of local community economy. Members suggested that the Administration should consider introducing appropriate traffic measures, such as by controlling vehicular access to Tai Yuen Street (South) and Cross Street (East), in order to retain the open-air bazaar there. Members also suggested that the Administration should draw on the successful experience of other places (such as Japan and Singapore) in developing bazaars into tourist attractions and actively explore the feasibility of preserving the open-air bazaar.

Discussions held by LegCo on retaining the open-air bazaar at Tai Yuen Street and Cross Street and supporting the development of bazaars

16. At the Council meetings on 5 July 2006 and 7 March 2007, Hon Vincent Fang raised a written question on developing retail links and open-air bazaars with special characteristics, and an oral question on the long term policy in respect of open-air bazaars and the retention of the open-air bazaar at Tai Yuen Street and Cross Street respectively. Copies of the relevant questions and replies are in **Appendices III and IV** for members' reference.

17. During the motion debate on "Retaining and supporting the development of commercial districts and bazaars with local characteristics" at the Council meeting on 17 January 2007, some Members requested that the open-air bazaar at Tai Yuen Street and Cross Street should be fully retained. They pointed out

that the bazaar was one of the very few local bazaars with distinctive flavour, and it was also a well-known spot on Hong Kong island. Not only could it stimulate local consumption but interested tourists were also attracted there. They opined that if the size of the open-air bazaar was cut by half, the entire bazaar might disappear in no time.

Relevant Papers

18. A number of discussion papers on the built heritage conservation policy and the relevant public consultation exercises have been provided to the Panel on Home Affairs by the Administration. The relevant papers are listed in **Appendix V**. The Official Records of Proceedings of relevant Council meetings are available on the LegCo website at <http://www.legco.gov.hk>.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
10 July 2007

Brief on Nga Tsin Wai Village (衙前圍村)

Address: Bounded by Tung Kwong Road, Tung Fat Road and Tung Lung Road
Town Plan Zoning: Residential (Group A)
Historical Grading: N.A.

- Nga Tsin Wai village, originally known as “Hing Yau Yu Tsuen” (慶有餘村), was probably established by the Ng, Chan and Lee Clans in 1352. It is now the oldest village in the urban area in Hong Kong.
- In the early Qing, with the enforcement of the Imperial Evacuation Order in 1661-1669 and frequent disturbances by pirates, the villagers abandoned the Village and moved inland. In 1724, after the rescinding of the Order, the Ng Clan together with the Chan and Lee clans migrated back to the area and established “Nga Tsin Wai” Village at the present site. A drawbridge, village walls, moat and watch towers were built during the mid-Qing to protect the village against pirate and bandits attacks.
- The Wai follows the traditional Chinese village layout which is symmetrical and axial with a village temple at the rear end of the central axis. Seven rows of houses run from east to west separated by narrow alleys.
- Presently over 60 village houses had been demolished. The remaining houses had undergone various alterations at different periods and are in dilapidated condition.
- Other than the old village houses, there are three items of historical interest within the village:
 - (a) Tin Hau Temple (situated at the back row of houses)
 - (b) The gatehouse (the main entrance of the village)
 - (c) A stone tablet with the inscription of “慶有餘” embedded over the archway of the gatehouse.
- The gatehouse is used as the main entrance of the village. The structure follows traditional gatehouse layout in such ways that it is situated in the middle of the façade facing Tung Kwong Road and enshrined the earth god inside. A stone tablet with the inscription of

“慶有餘” is embedded over the archway, which bears the evidence of the other name of Nga Tsin Wai Village.

- The Tin Hau Temple was originally built in 1726 but had undergone large scale repairs over the years. The existing building is a small one-hall type temple.

Press Releases

LCQ9: Nga Tsin Wai Village redevelopment project

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Yuen-han and a written reply by the Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands, Mr Michael Suen, in the Legislative Council today (June 7):

Question:

It has been reported that when meeting the residents of Nga Tsin Wai Village (NTW Village) in February this year, the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) undertook to announce the commencement of the redevelopment project of the NTW Village within three months, but no announcement in respect of the project has been made so far. It has also been reported that as URA has to discuss with the developers the collaboration of the project, its commencement has to be delayed for a year. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council whether it knows:

(a) when URA will announce the commencement of the redevelopment project of the NTW Village; and

(b) whether URA will consult the villagers involved before deciding whether or not the project should be delayed, and provide them with rehousing and compensation first as originally planned?

Reply:

Madam President,

The Urban Renewal Authority (URA) is an independent statutory body established under the Urban Renewal Authority Ordinance. It is tasked with the mission to implement urban renewal. The Board of the URA is responsible for formulating and overseeing the policy and operation of the URA, including the timing for commencement of individual urban renewal projects, the implementation mode and the compensation policy.

Regarding the two parts of the question, the information provided by the URA is as follows:

(a) The Nga Tsin Wai Village project is one of the 25 urban renewal projects announced by the former Land Development Corporation. The URA has all along accorded priority to the handling of this project. At the end of last year, the Wong Tai Sin District Council, having considered the aspirations of the villagers of the Nga Tsin Wai Village, supported a comprehensive redevelopment of the Village with the preservation of the gate house, the embedded stone plaque and the Tin Hau Temple within the Village. The URA is now in close dialogue with the residents in order to assist them in addressing their issues of concern. At the same time, the URA is in discussion with the property owner who owns the majority of property interests within the project, with a view to exploring feasible options to implement the project. The URA will announce the details of the project upon the completion of the preparation work.

(b) The URA is now actively undertaking preparation work for

the Nga Tsin Wai Village project. The URA will continue to maintain close dialogue with the Wong Tai Sin District Council and the residents, and explain its current compensation and re-housing policy to the residents concerned. Following previous practice, the URA will, upon commencement of a redevelopment project, provide appropriate compensation, re-housing and the necessary assistance to the affected residents.

Ends/Wednesday, June 7, 2006
Issued at HKT 12:51

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Press Releases

LCQ8: Retail links and open-air bazaars with special characteristics

Following is a question by the Hon Vincent Fang and a written reply by the Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands, Mr Michael Suen, in the Legislative Council today (July 5):

Question:

In the past, because of the Government's redevelopment projects, many shops in retail links and open-air bazaars with special characteristics in Hong Kong, such as the "Cloth Alley" of Wing On Street, the "Bird Street" of Hong Lok Street and the "Wedding Card Street" of Lee Tung Street, dispersed upon their relocation or closed down, resulting in Hong Kong losing many of such retail links and bazaars. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the number of existing retail links and open-air bazaars with special characteristics in Hong Kong, their names and locations;

(b) whether it knows if the current redevelopment projects or town plans involve relocation or demolition of the above retail links and bazaars, including the "Sports Shoe Street" in the older district of Sai Yee Street and Fa Yuen Street at Mong Kok, and whether there are plans to retain such retail links and open-air bazaars with special characteristics; and

(c) how shops operating in such retail links and bazaars affected by redevelopment projects will be resettled?

Reply:

Madam President,

My reply to the three parts of the question is as follows:

(a) We understand that the Hong Kong Tourism Board publicizes among visitors various thematic retail links and open-air bazaars through its publications and websites, etc. Thematic retail links include Hollywood Road (Antiques Street), Des Voeux Road West (Dried Seafood Street), Ko Shing Street (Herbal Medicine Street), Bonham Strand West and Wing Lok Street (Ginseng and Bird's Nest Street), Canton Road (Jade Street), a section of Tung Choi Street between Prince Edward Road West and Mong Kok Road (Goldfish Market), Mong Kok Flower Market Road (Flower Market), a section of Tung Choi Street between Argyle Street and Dundas Street (Ladies' Market) and a section of Fa Yuen Street between Argyle Street and Soy Street (Sportswear Street), etc. Open-air bazaars include Stanley Bazaar, Tai Yuen Street Bazaar, Jardine's Crescent Bazaar, Apliu Street Bazaar, Bowring Street Bazaar, Temple Street Night Bazaar, a Bazaar in the section of Fa Yuen Street between Prince Edward West and Mong Kok Road and Bird Market in Yuen Po Street, etc.

The Hong Kong Tourism Board mainly selects thematic retail links for promotion where there is a high concentration of shops selling a particular type of goods. For open-air bazaars,

there should be a certain number of shops or stalls operating in an open-air environment. Both the retail links and open-air bazaars should also be easily accessible by public transport. The views of the District Councils will also be taken into account in the selection process.

(b) The Urban Renewal Authority (URA) adopts a holistic "4R" urban renewal strategy, comprising redevelopment, rehabilitation, revitalisation and preservation of buildings of historical value within its urban renewal projects. Specifically, when considering the development modes for individual urban renewal projects, the URA will take into account the actual circumstances and widely consult the affected residents and relevant stakeholders, including gauging their views on the need and the way to preserve streets which are perceived by the public to be of special characteristics as well as existing vibrant economic activities. For example, the previous "Cloth Alley" at Jubilee Street/Queen's Road Central project in Central and the "Bird Market" at Argyle Street/Shanghai Street project in Mong Kok (now become "The Centre" and the "Langham Place" respectively) were relocated to the Western Market and Yuen Po Street Bird Garden respectively. The URA is also conducting community and building condition surveys for the Sai Yee Street project in Mong Kok with a view to working out a way forward for the project.

(c) In taking forward urban renewal projects, the URA will provide appropriate cash compensation to shop operators affected by redevelopment in accordance with the compensation policy formulated by its Board, including providing the market value of the premises and ex-gratia payments to cover possible losses arising from the relocation of their businesses. Shop operators may start their businesses again at locations of their choice with the cash compensation. The URA will handle individual cases flexibly taking into account specific circumstances of each case.

Ends/Wednesday, July 5, 2006
Issued at HKT 12:35

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Press Releases

LCQ4: Open-air bazaars

Following is a question by the Hon Vincent Fang and a reply by the Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food, Dr York Chow, in the Legislative Council today (March 7):

Question:

Most of the cities in the world have bazaars with special characteristics which can offer various types of jobs and boost spending of tourists and local residents. However, the open-air bazaars in Hong Kong have incessantly been affected by town planning and have to be relocated, reduced in area or even scrapped. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) whether it has formulated any long-term policy on the retention or otherwise of open-air bazaars; of the numbers of existing open-air bazaars and shop operators and hawkers involved, as well as the estimated number of employees working in these bazaars;

(b) whether it knows if the authorities concerned, apart from relocating some of the stall hawkers in the open-air bazaars in Tai Yuen Street and Cross Street of Wan Chai this year, have any similar relocation plans in the future; if they have, of the bazaars involved and the details of such relocation plans; and

(c) given that the reasons for relocating some stall hawkers in the open-air bazaars in Tai Yuen Street and Cross Street are to enable refuse collection vehicles to access the Urban Renewal Authority's new development project in that area to collect refuse and to solve the problem of increased traffic brought by that development project, whether the Government will consider following the arrangement in Tai Yuen Street (south), and shorten the duration during which Cross Street (east) is designated as pedestrian zone to between 10 am and 6 pm daily, thereby allowing refuse collection vehicles and other vehicles to use Cross Street (east) during other time of the day and at the same time completely retaining the open-air bazaars in Tai Yuen Street and Cross Street?

Reply:

Madam President,

There are different forms of open-air bazaars in Hong Kong. Apart from bazaars comprising of licensed fixed hawker pitches, there are also open-air bazaars for celebrating festivals or featuring special themes (such as the Temporary New Year Market Fair beside Lam Tsuen, Tai Po), temporary open-air bazaars held by Government departments (e.g. District Offices) and various organisations (e.g. District Councils). While the Government understands that the public wishes to conserve customs and facilities with local colour, we must accept that every city inevitably undergoes an evolutionary process where new developments replace old ones. The Government will strive to strike a balance between public concerns and the needs for

urban development. Provided that an open-air bazaar does not affect environmental hygiene, causes nuisance or obstruction and has the support of the District Council and the local community concerned, the Government will endeavour to retain the open-air bazaar. We will answer the questions raised by the Hon Vincent Fang as follows:

(a) The Government does not have the statistics of all open-air bazaars in the territory. Of the open-air bazaars comprising of Hawker Permitted Places for licensed fixed pitch hawkers under the supervision of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, 49 of them comprises of ten or more fixed hawker pitches and 13 of them are large open-air bazaars that have 100 or more licensed fixed hawker pitches. They are scattered around the districts of Eastern, Wan Chai, Central & Western on Hong Kong Island, Yau Tsim Mong and Sham Shui Po.

If individual redevelopment projects undertaken by the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) involve the relocation of fixed stall hawkers in FEHD's hawker areas, FEHD will co-operate with the URA, and discuss with the relevant District Councils and affected hawkers with a view to rendering assistance as appropriate, including the relocation of the affected hawkers. As regards the hawkers affected by other redevelopments and development projects, FEHD will also work with the relevant Government departments and bodies and make the appropriate arrangements.

(b) The redevelopment plan for Graham Street in Central unveiled by the URA recently shows that licensed fixed hawker pitches within the draft plan area may also be affected. As for the relocation plan for the open-air bazaar at Tai Yuen Street and Cross Street at Wan Chai, 80-odd fixed hawker pitches at Tai Yuen Street (North) and Cross Street (West) can stay put, which means the open-air bazaar will be conserved to some extent. The plan is intended to conserve the old open-air bazaar as far as possible while making room for new developments to improve the life and activities of the local community.

(c) The Government considers it necessary to relocate the fixed hawker pitches at Tai Yuen Street (South) and Cross Street (East) mainly because the roads are not adequate to meet the needs of rising population and pedestrian traffic generated by new residential and commercial development in the area. The relocation is not intended to resolve the access problem of refuse collection vehicles going to the refuse collection point at Cross Street. According to the traffic assessment analysis of the Transport Department, it is necessary to open up the road sections concerned for one way traffic to allow vehicles entering Tai Yuen Street (South) to access Queen's Road East by way of Cross Street (East) and Wai Chai Road. If these road sections are not opened for vehicular traffic, the traffic problems cannot be resolved and the situation of insufficient road capacity for meeting the needs of pedestrians and drivers will enhance the risk of traffic accident. Moreover, reducing the number of fixed pitch hawker will also help raising the standard of environmental hygiene, thereby improving the living environment of the neighbourhood. The relocation arrangement has balanced the interests of various parties and has been endorsed by the Wai Chai District Council.

Ends/Wednesday, March 7, 2007
Issued at HKT 16:03
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Appendix V

Relevant papers on review of built heritage conservation policy and other related papers

Meeting	Date of meeting/Item	Paper
Panel on Home Affairs	22.3.2004 (Item V : Review of built heritage conservation policy)	<u>Minutes</u> <u>Agenda</u>
Panel on Home Affairs	9.11.2004 (Item V : Review of built heritage conservation policy)	<u>Minutes</u> <u>Agenda</u>
Panel on Home Affairs	16.10.2006 (Item I : Briefing by the Secretary for Home Affairs on the Chief Executive's Policy Address 2006-2007)	<u>Minutes</u> <u>Agenda</u>
Panel on Home Affairs	9.3.2007 (Item III : Built heritage conservation)	<u>Minutes</u> <u>Agenda</u>
Panel on Home Affairs	20.4.2007 (Item I : Built heritage conservation)	<u>Agenda</u>
Council Meeting	Progress report on the motion on "Retaining and supporting the development of commercial districts and bazaars with local characteristics" provided by the Administration[CB(3)448/06-07](issued on 27 March 2007)	