

立法會
Legislative Council

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by the Administration)

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Panel on Planning, Lands and Works

**Minutes of special meeting
held on Monday, 23 April 2007 at 4:30 pm
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building**

Members present : Hon LAU Wong-fat, GBM, GBS, JP (Chairman)
Prof Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon James TIEN Pei-chun, GBS, JP
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, SBS, S.B.St.J., JP
Dr Hon LUI Ming-wah, SBS, JP
Hon Bernard CHAN, GBS, JP
Hon CHAN Kam-lam, SBS, JP
Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun, SBS, JP
Hon CHOY So-yuk, JP
Hon Timothy FOK Tsun-ting, GBS, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon Vincent FANG Kang, JP
Hon LEE Wing-tat
Hon Daniel LAM Wai-keung, SBS, JP
Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
Hon CHEUNG Hok-ming, SBS, JP

Members attending : Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon CHAN Yuen-han, JP
Dr Hon YEUNG Sum
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung

Members absent : Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon WONG Yung-kan, JP
Hon Miriam LAU Kin-ye, GBS, JP
Hon LI Kwok-ying, MH, JP

Public officers attending : **Agenda item I**

Mr Michael SUEN, GBS, JP
Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Mrs Rita LAU, JP
Permanent Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands
(Planning and Lands)

Mrs Ava NG, JP
Director of Planning

Mr MA Lee-tak, JP
Project Manager (Hong Kong Island & Islands)
Hong Kong Island and Islands Development Office
Civil Engineering and Development Department

Mr WAN Man-lung, JP
Principal Government Engineer/Railway Development
Highways Department

Dr Louis NG
Assistant Director (Heritage & Museums)
Leisure and Cultural Services Department

Mr LAM Sair-ling
Senior Property Services Manager/Eastern & Antiquities
Architectural Services Department

Agenda item II

Ms Ivy LAW
Principal Assistant Secretary for Housing, Planning and
Lands (Planning & Lands) 4

Attendance by invitation : Agenda item I

MTR Corporation Limited

Mr Malcolm GIBSON
Chief Design Manager

Agenda Item II

Urban Renewal Authority

Mr Billy LAM
Managing Director

Mr Quinn LAW
Executive Director (Commercial & Corporate)

Ms Iris TAM
Executive Director (Planning & Development)

Mr Ian WONG
General Manager (Property & Lands)

Mr Michael MA
Director, Planning and Design
Planning and Development Division

Clerk in attendance : Ms Anita SIT
Chief Council Secretary (1)4

Staff in attendance : Mr WONG Siu-yee
Senior Council Secretary (1)7

Ms Guy YIP
Council Secretary (1)1

Ms Christina SHIU
Legislative Assistant (1)7

I Arrangements for preservation of the Queen's Pier

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)1336/06-07(01) -- Submission received from The Conservancy Association on 10 April 2007
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1336/06-07(02) -- Submission dated 10 April 2007 from Hong Kong Federation of Students
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1336/06-07(03) -- Submission received from Designing Hong Kong Harbour District and The Experience Group, Limited on 10 April 2007
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1336/06-07(04) -- Submission dated April 2007 from The Hong Kong Institute of Planners
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1411/06-07(01) -- Submission received from The Hong Kong Institution of Engineers on 13 April 2007
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1411/06-07(02) -- Submission received from Association of Engineering Professionals in Society on 20 April 2007
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1411/06-07(03) -- Information paper entitled "Proposals for preservation of Queen's Pier in Central and the way forward" provided by the Administration
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1184/06-07(04) -- Information paper entitled "Proposals for preservation of Queen's Pier in Central" provided by the Administration
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1185/06-07 -- Minutes of meeting on 23 January 2007
- LC Paper No. CB(1)677/06-07(02) -- Information paper on "Arrangements relating to the reconstruction of old Star Ferry Clock Tower and relocation of Queen's Pier in Central" provided by the Administration
- LC Paper No. CB(1)677/06-07(03) -- Background brief on "Planning arrangements for the Star Ferry Pier and Queen's Pier in Central" prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat

LC Paper No. CB(1)1253/06-07(01) -- Submission dated 27 March 2007 from Designing Hong Kong Harbour District and The Experience Group, Limited)

Members noted the submission from a group of artists, cultural practitioners and academics and the submission from The Hong Kong Institute of Architects (HKIA) tabled at the meeting.

(Post-meeting note: The submissions (LC Paper Nos. CB(1)1444/06-07(01) and (02) respectively) were subsequently issued to members on 24 April 2007.)

2. The Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (SHPL) said that the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(1)1411/06-07(03)) provided a clear account of the work undertaken by the Administration in the preservation of the Queen's Pier since the last Panel meeting held on 27 March 2007. He hoped that the Panel, after further discussion of the issue at this meeting, would express support for the Administration's plan to submit a funding proposal for the preservation of the Queen's Pier to the Public Works Subcommittee (PWSC) and the Finance Committee (FC) in early May and end of May 2007 respectively.

3. Mr LEE Wing-tat said that the Democratic Party would not support the Administration's proposal at this stage because the Administration did not have a clear commitment on how it would preserve the Queen's Pier. The intention to dismantle the Queen's Pier was clear, but the plan for reprovisioning remained uncertain. He could not see any urgency for the Administration to submit its funding proposal in May 2007 and was worried that the Administration would not adopt in-situ preservation after obtaining funding approval. The Administration should defer the submission of its funding proposal because the consultation period with the public was too short and such a move would heighten the tension and lead to confrontations. He hoped that the Administration could continue its dialogue with relevant concern groups with a view to arriving at a consensus. Regarding proposal (a), he asked whether it was really impossible to preserve the Queen's Pier in-situ by shifting the alignment of the Extended Overrun Tunnel (EOT). For proposal (c), he asked whether international experts had been consulted on its technical feasibility.

4. In response, SHPL said that the reclamation works at Queen's Pier had already been delayed pending resolution of the Queen's Pier issue. The Administration would seek funding approval first for preserving the components of the Queen's Pier so that reclamation works could continue to proceed, and there would be more time for identifying a generally acceptable location for reprovisioning. As regards public consultation, the Administration had conducted in-depth consultation work and met some of the 11 invited organizations to discuss the preservation of the Queen's Pier. The Administration had also attended a town

hall meeting lasting over three and a half hours with other interested organizations and individuals, and all relevant issues had been thoroughly discussed.

5. In relation to the EOT, Mr Malcolm GIBSON, Chief Design Manager of the MTR Corporation Limited, explained that the existing arrangement was for trains of the Airport Express Line and Tung Chung Line to turn back at the approach side (western side) of the Hong Kong Station and this arrangement limited the capacities of the two lines. The intention was to construct a new EOT with sufficient length on the eastern side of the Hong Kong Station in future so that the two lines could run at their planned capacities. An additional proposal was endorsed during the Second Railway Development Study to extend the Tung Chung Line to connect with the Island Line on the eastern part of Hong Kong Island in the long run so as to increase the capacities of the railway lines on Hong Kong Island and relieve the pressure of the North Point Interchange.

6. As regards proposal (c), the Project Manager (Hong Kong Island & Islands), Hong Kong Island and Islands Development Office of the Civil Engineering and Development Department (PM/CEDD) pointed out that the structure of the Queen's Pier was flimsy, with 34 columns and two shear walls. Rolling would require load transfer of 34 columns and two shear walls in synchronization. Any uneven movement would lead to rupture in the roof of the Queen's Pier. The Administration had discussed with professional organizations on this proposal and organizations in the engineering sector fully appreciated the technical complexities and high risks involved in rolling. Successful experience in rolling in other places would not be applicable to the Queen's Pier due to structural difference.

7. Dr YEUNG Sum said that the Democratic Party considered that the Queen's Pier should be preserved as a heritage to reflect Hong Kong's history. It had important historical value and should not be demolished. Non in-situ preservation of the Queen's Pier would destroy its historical value. The Democratic Party would not support its funding proposal unless the Administration had provided a full picture about the preservation arrangements and included the full costs for all necessary works for preservation in its funding proposal. The Democratic Party had adopted a practical attitude and considered proposal (d) an acceptable option if in-situ preservation was adopted. In order to solve traffic problems, dismantling and reassembling the Queen's Pier in-situ would be an eclectic solution. Now that the Administration refused to commit to in-situ preservation giving the excuse that further consultation was required, the Democratic Party would ask the Administration to withhold its funding proposal until it had obtained a clear idea of the preference of the public through consultation.

8. In response, the Permanent Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Planning and Lands) (PSPL) said that there was already a consensus on preserving the Queen's Pier, but the form of preservation would need further consultation. Apart from views that the Queen's Pier should be preserved in-situ,

there were also views that the Queen's Pier should be reassembled at the new waterfront so as to retain its function as a pier. The Administration fully appreciated the need for conducting bottom-up consultation and assimilating the public's views. The public would be consulted on the location for the reassembling of the Queen's Pier in the Central Reclamation Urban Design Study (the Study) which would commence in early May 2007.

9. Miss CHAN Yuen-han considered that the call for in-situ preservation was clear enough and re-provisioning the Queen's Pier at the new waterfront would not be able to retain its spatial relationship with the City Hall and Edinburgh Place. The Queen's Pier was an important place in the history of Hong Kong and Hong Kong had not taken adequate measures in heritage preservation when compared with other places. Although some organizations found proposal (c) acceptable, she was not entirely satisfied with proposal (c). She supported adopting proposal (a) and doubted whether it was really technical infeasible as claimed by the Administration and some professional organizations because there were engineering professionals who considered that proposal (a) was a feasible option. From the experience of how the Administration had handled the Star Ferry Pier incident, she did not have confidence in the Administration's proposed way forward for the Queen's Pier at this stage. She pointed out that the Administration had preserved the former Kai Tak runway after consulting and listening to the views of the public, and she supported conducting the study on the Cruise Terminal at Kai Tak because the Administration had provided a clear picture of the project. However, in the present case, the Administration was seeking support for its funding proposal without providing the necessary details.

10. In response, PSPL said that in conducting the Study, the Administration would take into account the view of retaining the spatial relationship and atmosphere among the Queen's Pier, the clock tower of the former Star Ferry Pier and the City Hall. As various views had their own bases, the Administration should not set any constraints on the possible locations for reassembling the Queen's Pier before conducting the Study. SHPL added that preservation of the Queen's Pier in-situ, in close proximity to its present location, or at the new waterfront were all possibilities. The preservation of the Queen's Pier was divided into two stages and the location for reassembly would be identified in the second stage during the Study after consulting the public.

11. Dr KWOK Ka-ki pointed out that while the Mainland had a clear policy on in-situ heritage preservation, Hong Kong had very few heritage buildings/structures left and the Queen's Pier was definitely one of those that should be preserved. Noting the historical value and the fragile structure of the Queen's Pier, he queried why the Administration still planned to dismantle the Queen's Pier. He commented that the public consultation on the preservation of the Queen's Pier to be conducted by the Administration was actually a consultation on how to dismantle the Queen's Pier. The Administration was going against the call for in-situ preservation of the Queen's Pier. In-situ preservation should be possible because the works for Road P2, the EOT and the stormwater drainage box

culvert had not yet commenced. There should be sufficient space to accommodate these infrastructures at the reclaimed site. The Administration should convince members and the public that it would make the best endeavour to preserve the heritage that society treasured.

12. In response, SHPL said that the Administration had held several meetings with professional organizations to discuss and consult with them on the preservation of the Queen's Pier, and the details and feasibility of each preservation option had been clearly explained in the Administration's paper. The Administration had the determination to preserve heritage and had spent a lot of efforts in heritage preservation. The preservation of the Legislative Council Building, Kom Tong Hall and Lui Seng Chun were just a few of the examples.

13. Ir Dr Raymond HO commented that the Administration had conducted an in-depth and careful study on the preservation of the Queen's Pier and it would be unfair to distrust the Administration. The issue of whether a heritage should be preserved and whether it should be preserved in-situ involved a subjective element. The Queen's Pier had already been relocated two times and the historical value of the former Blake Pier should be higher than that of the Queen's Pier. If really technically feasible, he would support in-situ preservation of the Queen's Pier. However, there were many complicated considerations, such as the box culvert, EOT and costs. As regards rolling the Queen's Pier under proposal (c), he commented that the method could be very dangerous in view of the large size of the pier and the fact that its roof was essentially a flat-slab construction without any beams. Synchronization of load transfer at all 34 nodal points was practically impossible. Drawing reference from the Sze Shan Street accident in which an industrial building collapsed during demolition, he alerted that accidents might occur in rolling the Queen's Pier. The function of the Queen's Pier should also be preserved and thus it should be reprovisioned at a waterfront location. He sought further explanation on the technical constraints imposed by the box culvert and EOT.

14. In response, PM/CEDD explained that a gradient of 1:2000 for the box culvert was very gentle and its alignment was constrained by the EOT and cooling water mains. Safety was one major consideration for the appropriateness of proposal (c). Unlike proposal (d) where the dismantling of the components could be precisely controlled, there might be unexpected uneven movement during load transfer and rolling. As for the EOT, the Principal Government Engineer/Railway Development of the Highways Department (PGE/RD) explained that the Airport Express Line and Tung Chung Line at the location had a total of four railway tracks and the total width of the four box structures for the tracks was nearly 30 metres. Even if the lowest safety standard was adopted for the transition curve and turning radius, the EOT could not avoid the Queen's Pier. The EOT was required for changing the existing arrangements for turn back of trains at the approach side so as to increase the capacities of the two lines. The EOT would also constitute part of the proposed North Hong Kong Island Line (NIL), which would be a very important component of the railway network on Hong Kong Island. The plan was

to have two railway lines along the northern shore of Hong Kong Island, one connecting Tung Chung with Chai Wan and the other connecting Tseung Kwan O with Kennedy Town.

15. Prof Patrick LAU referred to the submission from HKIA, which stated that the Administration had distorted HKIA's views by claiming that HKIA did not object to proposal (d). In-situ preservation was the premise upheld by HKIA from the architectural perspective. He enquired about the timetable for preserving the Queen's Pier and amending the alignment of Road P2 if in-situ preservation was adopted. As the Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB) would assess the historical value and rating of the Queen's Pier, he would not support proposal (d) at this stage when the outcome of the assessment was not yet available.

16. In response, SHPL said that the location for the reassembly of the Queen's Pier had yet to be decided and if it was decided to be reassembled at its original location, the alignment of Road P2 would have to be reconsidered. However, it was not necessary to consider the issue at present. In relation to AAB, the Assistant Director (Heritage & Museums) of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (AD/H&M) said that in March 2002, AAB had made a recommendation on reassembling valuable components of the Queen's Pier in its preservation and this fact was reaffirmed by AAB in December 2006. AAB would assess the historical value and rating of the Queen's Pier at its meeting scheduled for 9 May 2007. As no AAB members had suggested that the Queen's Pier should be declared as a statutory monument during the past AAB meetings and AAB had already provided its recommendation, the choice of the preservation option should be left to the public and the professionals.

17. Miss CHOY So-yuk considered that in preserving the Queen's Pier, the historical value of the integrated complex comprising the Queen's Pier, City Hall and Edinburgh Place should be maintained. She emphasized that once demolished, heritage would be lost forever. Except for the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers which had expressed its views clearly, other organizations were only accepting proposal (d) unwillingly, and the Administration had not disclosed sufficient information to them. The Administration should present all possible preservation options and provide the public with information on the spatial relationship between the reprovisioned Queen's Pier, City Hall and Edinburgh Place. As regards NIL, she disagreed that preserving the Queen's Pier in-situ would render the construction of NIL impossible.

18. In response, PSPL said that the Administration would prepare models of different preservation options for public consultation during the Study. The preservation of the Queen's Pier involved several stages of work and the preservation options were derived from various views received. She added that reassembly at the original location would certainly be one of the options. SHPL emphasized that the Administration had disclosed all relevant information and consulted professional organizations on the preservation of the Queen's Pier.

19. Mr Albert CHAN welcomed that the Administration had changed its attitude in the preservation of the Queen's Pier. Whether the Administration would take forward the matter sincerely or whether it was only the Administration's public relations gesture for gaining more support could be determined from the outcome of the preservation work. The reprovisioned Queen's Pier should be one that was recognized by the public as a good end-product. He opined that a design without water and historical elements would not produce a desirable outcome. The Administration should demonstrate its sincerity by providing concept plans to illustrate the outlook of the Queen's Pier after its reprovisioning. The difference in views was only on in-situ preservation against non in-situ preservation at a nearby location. From the view of using public funds, it would be unreasonable and irresponsible for the Legislative Council to approve a funding proposal without knowing the details of the preservation plan. The Administration should provide concept plans and more details when submitting the funding proposal.

20. In response, SHPL said that a lot of difficult work had to be done in future. Seeking funding from PWSC was only the first step in preserving the Queen's Pier, and the way forward would be decided through the Study. As the proposal was a funding proposal, a clear description of the items included would be required and conceptual information alone would not suffice. Depending on the location for reassembling the Queen's Pier, the Administration might need to seek further funding in future for other necessary works. The reassembled Queen's Pier would retain its present outlook as far as possible. PSPL added that the Administration would prepare concept plans for the Study and provide PWSC with those concept plans.

21. Mr Abraham SHEK said that whether an option would be feasible would depend on the costs willing to be committed. He supported proposal (d) because a balance had to be struck between various considerations. There could be different perspectives, such as architectural or engineering perspective, in considering the preservation of the Queen's Pier. Although from the architectural point of view, the Queen's Pier was not an architectural gem worthy of preservation, the Administration had taken into consideration its historical significance and listened to the views of the public in preserving the Queen's Pier. Whether preserving in-situ or in close proximity would not make too much of a difference and there were also successful precedents of heritage preservation at another location. As further disputes would not be conducive in resolving the matter, various sectors should accede and adopt a practical approach in preserving the Queen's Pier.

22. Noting that the alignment of Road P2 would have to be amended if the Administration decided to reassemble the Queen's Pier in-situ, Mr Alan LEONG said that it would be more logical to amend the alignment of Road P2 right away given the clear preference of the community for in-situ preservation. He commented that the Administration had over-emphasized the views of the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers and the Association of Engineering Professionals in Society because there were also calls for in-situ preservation from 18 organizations. He pointed out that whether NIL would be constructed was still an

uncertainty, and queried whether there was a need to increase the capacity of the Airport Express Line given that it had been operating at a loss up to the present. If the EOT was necessary, he asked why it was not constructed at this stage to avoid the need for digging trenches in future. As these infrastructure projects might never materialize, they should not be used as justifications for ruling out in-situ preservation of the Queen's Pier. He had heard that the works contract for Central Reclamation Phase III and Road P2 would last until 2009. If that was the case, the statutory process for amending the alignment of Road P2, which would only require about one year, should not affect the above works.

23. In response, SHPL said that the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(1)1184/06-07(04)) submitted to the Panel in March 2007 had clearly explained the bases of the Administration's proposal, including the constraints imposed by the works relating to the box culvert, EOT and Road P2 on the preservation of the Queen's Pier. All those constraints had to be overcome for an option to be feasible. The Queen's Pier had to be relocated first to allow these works to proceed and it would be reassembled after completion of those works.

24. Mr Malcolm GIBSON, Chief Design Manager of the MTR Corporation Limited, said that NIL was a very important part of the future railway network. In the Second Railway Development Study, it was intended to be completed before 2011 or 2012. The project was not started because the population growth had slowed down. When it would be constructed would depend on financial arrangements and the population growth in the catchments on Hong Kong Island and in Tseung Kwan O. NIL would also relieve the pressure at the North Point Interchange. It would be a mistake to limit the future capacity of the Airport Express Line because it would be a long-term asset for Hong Kong. Railway transport was the most sustainable form of transport. In response to Mr LEONG's further enquiry, he did not preclude the possibility of relocating Queen's Pier when decisions were made to implement the EOT and NIL projects, should the railway projects be the only issue in hand.

25. Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming considered that the preparation of four preservation options by the Administration had facilitated a more focused discussion of the preservation of the Queen's Pier, which was a dilemma between conservation and development. As there were technical constraints involved in proposals (a) and (b), only two options were left for further consideration. Proposal (c) involved in-situ preservation while preservation at another location was possible under proposal (d). Although proposal (d) was a practical option in terms of technical requirements and costs, the Administration had to provide sufficient information to convince him that it should be adopted. Regardless of what preservation option was adopted, the Administration should prepare concept plans to enable members and the public to make an informed choice.

26. In response, PSPL said that the Queen's Pier would be preserved and the Administration would consult the public on whether to reassemble it in-situ or at

another location. Concept plans would be displayed to the public to facilitate the identification of a preservation mode supported by the public.

27. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung commented that the construction of NIL might not materialize and constructing the EOT at this stage would only be a waste of public funds. Many cultural groups supported in-situ preservation and HKIA's submission stated that the Administration should not claim that HKIA did not object to proposal (d). If the Administration respected public views, in-situ preservation was the only option that should be adopted. He considered that in-situ preservation should be the principle, otherwise any discussion would only be futile. The Administration should provide a clear indication on whether in-situ preservation would be adopted and free itself from any complex in this matter. He added that the Administration would have to be held responsible if there were confrontations and massive arrests arising from the preservation of the Queen's Pier.

28. In response, SHPL said that the Administration did not have any complex and reiterated that reassembly of the Queen's Pier at its original location was a possibility under the Administration's proposal. He could not see why there would be massive arrests arising from the matter.

Motion

29. Dr KWOK Ka-ki moved the following motion:

"本事務委員會促請政府原址保留皇后碼頭。"

(Translation)

"That the Panel urges the Government to preserve the Queen's Pier in-situ."

30. The Chairman considered that the motion was directly related to the agenda item under discussion and members agreed to proceed with the motion. Five members voted for and 10 members voted against the motion. The Chairman declared the motion negatived.

31. On the Administration's proposal to seek funding support from PWSC for the preservation of the Queen's Pier, 10 members voted for and four members voted against the proposal, and one member abstained. The Chairman declared that the Panel supported the Administration's proposal to seek funding support from PWSC.

II Work of the Urban Renewal Authority

(LC Paper No. CB(1)1184/06-07(07) -- Information paper provided by the Administration

LC Paper No. CB(1)1184/06-07(08) -- "List of relevant events and

- LC Paper No. CB(1)1254/06-07(01) -- papers" prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat Letter dated 26 March 2007 from Hon WONG Kwok-hing on the work of the Urban Renewal Authority
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1277/06-07(01) -- Submission dated 29 March 2007 from K28 Sport Shoes Street Concern Group on the work of the Urban Renewal Authority)

32. As the discussion of the previous agenda item had overrun by 40 minutes, the Chairman suggested and members agreed to extend the meeting to end at 7:00 pm.

33. At the invitation of the Chairman, Principal Assistant Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Planning and Lands) 4 (PAS(P&L)4) briefed members on the latest progress of the work of the Urban Renewal Authority (URA). She said that in implementing urban renewal projects, URA had given priority to the 25 projects announced by the former Land Development Corporation (LDC) in 1998, including the newly announced mega Kwun Tong Town Centre Redevelopment Project which was the biggest redevelopment project ever rolled out by URA. The Administration had all along encouraged URA to devote greater efforts in the community engagement process, particularly at the planning stage of its projects, to gauge the views of stakeholders with a view to arriving at mutually consensual project plans.

34. The Managing Director of URA (MD/URA) said that the development scheme plans of the Kwun Tong Town Centre Redevelopment Project had been submitted to the Town Planning Board on 20 April 2007. Members were welcome to visit Kwun Tong whereat an on-site detailed briefing of the Project could be arranged. He then highlighted the latest position of the work of URA in respect of its holistic "4Rs" strategy, i.e. redevelopment of dilapidated buildings, rehabilitation of buildings in need of repair, revitalization of the economic and environmental fabric of old districts and preservation of buildings with historical, cultural or architectural value within its urban renewal action areas, as well as URA's financial position as at 31 March 2006. He remarked that in making the best endeavour to implement the 25 announced LDC projects without delay, URA also took heed of the diverse interests of different stakeholders as well as the community's growing concern about heritage conservation and aspirations for better living environment. The Legislative Council (LegCo) holding two separate motion debates relevant to the subject of heritage preservation at the sitting of 17 January 2007 was a good indication of the interests and importance that the community placed on the subject. He assured Members that URA would strive to balance the diverse interests of stakeholders and give due regard to views expressed in the community in rolling out its projects.

Reviewing the urban renewal strategy (URS) and the institutional arrangements for URA

35. Dr KWOK Ka-ki was disappointed that SHPL did not take part in the discussion of this agenda item and considered that this showed the Administration's disinterest in the subject of urban renewal. Furthermore, he expressed grave concern about the misery URA had brought about to the residents and shop operators in implementing its redevelopment projects, such as Lee Tung Street (i.e. the "Wedding Card Street"), Sai Yee Street (i.e. the "Sports Shoe Street") and Graham Street, and dissatisfaction of concern groups, and commented that the root of the problems was the institutional arrangements for URA, which mandated it to operate on a financially self-sustainable basis and hence its adoption of commercial principles in undertaking urban renewal projects. He pointed out that in other cities such as Shanghai, Suzhou and Singapore, urban renewal took the form of preservation and rejuvenation of the old districts and new developments would only be erected in the vicinity. In contrast, URA was pursuing urban renewal in a very different direction. For instance, many buildings along Graham Street had been proposed to be demolished and high-rise buildings up to some 30 storeys which would not fit in the local building morphology would be erected in future; and the iconic Blue House in Wanchai might be preserved but by way of compulsory clearance of the existing residents and retention of the building for other uses in future. As such, he strongly urged the Administration to set out a concrete timetable to review the existing institutional arrangements for URA, in particular its financial management principles, and the prevailing Urban Renewal Strategy (URS) so as to better meet the public's aspirations.

36. In response, PAS(P&L)4 said that the Government had made substantial financial commitment in urban renewal through injection of \$10 billion to URA and granting land at nominal premium for URA to implement urban renewal projects. Given that public coffers were involved, URA was required to exercise care and diligence in handling its finances. Under its "4Rs" strategy, URA had implemented projects that incurred losses to rejuvenate, rehabilitate and revitalize old districts. As regards the URS, which was a set of working guidelines for URA, she re-stated the Administration's position already expressed at the special meeting of the Finance Committee on 21 March 2007 that as URA had given priority to implementing the former LDC projects, there were so far only a few new projects commenced under the URA Ordinance (Cap. 563). It was therefore necessary for URA to accumulate more experience to enable a meaningful review.

37. Mr Abraham SHEK declared that he was the Chief Executive of the former LDC. He pointed out that urban renewal had already been implemented in Hong Kong for more than 30 years and 20-odd relevant studies had been completed by the Planning Department. He therefore considered that the Administration's reply to Dr KWOK Ka-ki was only a pretext to delay reviewing URS and the institutional arrangements for URA. He pointed out that redevelopment guidelines had been clearly set out by the former LDC for its 25

uncompleted projects. URA however had failed to grasp development opportunities amidst the property market downturn after the outbreak of the Asian financial crisis and the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, and had not performed with due diligence to improve the livelihood of people living in the decaying old districts. As LegCo had approved the funding of \$10 billion for URA to implement its projects, URA should gainfully employ the resources and implement the redevelopment projects swiftly. Rather than aiming at profitability, such as by constructing high-rise buildings, URA should place more emphasis on improving the overall living environment of the districts concerned, such as by constructing low-rise buildings and leisure facilities. To enhance accountability, he requested URA to provide information on its financial results/status (profit/loss) of the individual completed/on-going projects launched by URA.

38. Concurring with Mr Abraham SHEK, Mr Albert CHAN pointed out that in fact Mr SHEK had led by example by reporting to the relevant committee of the LegCo the financial results/status of LDC's projects when he served as the Chief Executive of the former LDC. In addition to the information requested by Mr SHEK, Mr Albert CHAN requested URA to include in its information paper the estimated profits of the respective developers/partners for projects undertaken through cooperation between URA and developers/partners. Dr Fernando CHEUNG and Prof Patrick LAU added that URA should also provide a comparison of the average rentals and average premiums in the respective districts at the time when the respective redevelopment projects were announced and after completion of those redevelopment projects, a comparison of the gross floor areas of the respective sites before and after development, and the vision and future work plan of URA.

39. Miss CHAN Yuen-han cautioned that the delay in reviewing the existing strategy for implementing urban renewal would lead to dire problems which eventually would have to be rectified by the Government. She expressed dissatisfaction that URA had been playing tactics and took advantage of the confrontations among residents, shop operators, and other stakeholders in many of its projects. Citing the Nga Tsin Wai Village Project, she pointed out that the original intention of the Wong Tai Sin District Council (WTSDC) was to preserve the whole village. As she understood, villagers were told that their relocation would be unduly delayed if preservation of the whole village was pursued. On that understanding, the villagers had requested to scale down the extent of preservation and henceforth WTSDC's agreement to preserve only the existing village gatehouse, stone plaque over the entrance and temple. She criticized the unscrupulous tactics used as well as the slow progress made by URA in the implementation of its projects, and commented that the existing policy and strategy to take forward urban renewal should be critically reviewed without delay.

40. Miss CHOY So-yuk said that she shared the views expressed by other Members and had doubts on the operational and financial constraints which URA purported to be faced with. She pointed out that in the redevelopment project of

the 18-storey Lai Sing Court on Tai Hang Road, the private developer concerned had offered the property owners concerned "flat-for-flat" compensation plus rental allowance up to at least three years during the course of redevelopment, and yet had been able to make a profit from the project. She therefore seriously doubted the ground for URA to refuse arranging rehousing within the same district for affected residents of redevelopment projects.

41. Noting members' views and opinions, MD/URA emphasized that URA had never taken advantage of the confrontations among stakeholders. Instead, URA had all along endeavoured to implement its projects by balancing their diverse interests. He re-iterated that since its establishment, URA had given priority to implementing the 25 announced projects of the LDC and had followed the principles and procedures laid down in the URS in implementing each project.

Heritage conservation

42. Miss CHOY So-yuk expressed doubt on URA's commitment to the preservation of historical and heritage buildings. She said that at the meeting of the Panel on Home Affairs held on 20 April 2007, most deputations attended the meeting considered that the Government should revamp its policy on heritage conservation. As the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) was conducting a public consultation exercise in this regard and had yet to come up with a confirmed policy on what heritage buildings and features should be conserved and how to conserve them, she urged the Administration and URA not to demolish any old buildings which the public had expressed a wish to conserve before the outcome of HAB's public consultation was available.

43. In response, MD/URA said that while most of the announced LDC projects were currently being vigorously pursued by URA, three of them still remained at an advanced stage of planning due to the presence of built heritage or local character within the project sites. Special consideration would be given to whether and how the relevant heritage features or local character should be preserved in taking forward those projects. He elaborated that some of the heritage buildings/features concerned had been graded by the Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO), such as the three pre-war buildings at 186-190 Queen's Road East, while others might be preserved in view of their preservation value, such as the retention of the non-graded pre-war shophouses along Graham Street so as to preserve the local character. He assured Members that URA would strictly observe the recommendations made by AMO and AAB to preserve built heritage and take into consideration other relevant factors such as tourism value etc. Acknowledging the growing community sentiments towards heritage conservation and Members' concern over the pace of urban renewal projects, he stressed that URA would carefully consider all the views and strive to balance diverse interests of all relevant parties.

44. Mr Albert CHAN said that it was timely to conduct a comprehensive review on the issues relating to urban renewal in view of growing community

concern about heritage conservation and collective memory. The \$10 billion financial commitment approved by the LegCo for URA was meant for improving the livelihood of residents living in old districts and not for demolishing buildings with collective memory value. In this connection, he opined that the prevailing urban renewal policy, which was formulated more than 10 years ago, had failed to address the public's contemporary aspirations towards urban renewal. He cautioned that according to overseas experience, urban renewal policy that failed to meet public aspirations would give rise to social unrest. Indeed, dissenting sentiments had started to groom as evidenced from more and more confrontations among stakeholders of URA's projects. The "Sports Shoe Street" and the "Wedding Card Street" were apparent cases in point. As such, he intended to move a motion urging the Government to swiftly conduct a comprehensive review of its urban renewal policy and strategy.

45. The Chairman advised that Mr Albert CHAN gave the notice of his motion after 6:45 pm. According to the relevant House Rules, a motion moved 15 minutes beyond the appointed ending time of the meeting could not be dealt with at the meeting.

The way forward

46. As the discussion of the agenda item could not be finished by 7:00 pm, the Chairman suggested that another meeting be arranged to continue the Panel's discussion. Members agreed. They further suggested that SHPL and representatives from the HAB be invited to the future meeting to facilitate discussion.

III Any other business

47. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 7:05 pm.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
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