

For discussion on
19 December 2008

Legislative Council Panel on Development

Heritage Conservation – An Update on Key Initiatives

PURPOSE

This paper updates Members on the latest progress on the implementation of various heritage conservation initiatives since the announcement of the “Heritage Conservation Policy” in the 2007-08 Policy Address, as well as our plan for new and ongoing initiatives in the coming year.

PRESENT POSITION AND WAY FORWARD

2. Since the announcement of the various initiatives on heritage conservation, the Administration has made good progress in taking them forward. The latest position is set out in the ensuing paragraphs.

(A) Initiatives in the Public Domain

(1) Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA)

3. Under the HIA mechanism which took effect since January 2008, works agents of all new capital works projects are required to confirm with the Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO) whether their projects will affect heritage sites through the submission of checklists, and if they do, then an HIA will be required. In general, it will be best to avoid affecting these heritage sites. However, if some impact on these sites can really not be avoided, mitigation measures must be devised to the satisfaction of the AMO. Up to the end of November 2008, works agents have submitted over 1,300 checklists to AMO for processing. We are now reviewing how the HIA mechanism can be further improved with the experience gained.

(2) Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme

4. We rolled out the Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme on 22 February 2008 to provide financial assistance (in the form of capital grant to cover the cost for major renovation works to the historic buildings, nominal rental for the historic buildings and non-recurrent grant to

meet the starting costs and operating deficits) to non-profit-making organisations to put selected historic buildings to adaptive re-use through the operation of social enterprises. The Scheme aims to achieve the dual objectives that historic buildings will be properly preserved and at the same time be made available for use in the best interest of the community. There was exceptionally good response to the Scheme, and 114 applications for the Batch I of seven government-owned historic buildings were received with breakdown as follows –

Old Tai Po Police Station	23
Lui Seng Chun	30
Lai Chi Kok Hospital	10
North Kowloon Magistracy	22
Old Tai O Police Station	5
Fong Yuen Study Hall	8
Mei Ho House	16
Total:	114

5. An Advisory Committee on Revitalisation of Historic Buildings (comprising professionals and experts in the fields of historical research, architecture, surveying, social enterprise, finance, etc.) was set up in May 2008 to assess the applications. We expect that the vetting for the seven buildings would be completed shortly, with the results to be announced in February 2009. We will then approach the Legislative Council (LegCo) Public Works Sub-committee and the Finance Committee (FC) for capital works funding (under the sum of \$1 billion earmarked for the purpose) to implement the successful projects.

6. In view of the very good response to the Scheme, we are planning to roll out Batch II of the Scheme in the first half of 2009.

(3) Preservation Work of the Urban Renewal Authority (URA)

7. The past year marked a major step forward in URA's preservation and revitalisation work. In the 2007-08 Policy Address, the Chief Executive (CE) called on the URA to extend the scope of historic building protection to cover pre-war shophouses. In response, the URA has worked out a strategy to preserve up to 48 pre-war Cantonese verandah-type shophouses. An important part of this strategy is the URA's commencement of two projects in September 2008 to preserve 20 pre-war verandah-type shophouses at Shanghai Street and Prince Edward Road West for adaptive re-use. The URA has started engaging the public on the adaptive re-use of the buildings in these two projects.

(B) Initiatives in the Private Domain

(1) Economic Incentives for Conservation of Privately-owned Historic Buildings

8. Under the new heritage conservation policy, Government recognises the need for economic incentives in order to encourage and facilitate private owners to preserve their historic buildings. In implementing this policy, we aim to strike a proper balance between preservation of historic buildings and respect for private property rights. It is further noted that given the particular circumstances, the needed economic incentives to achieve the policy objective would have to be considered on a case-by-case basis. We have subsequently applied the policy on economic incentives to facilitate conservation of privately-owned historic buildings to the first case of King Yin Lei at 45 Stubbs Road, Hong Kong.

9. The Secretary for Development (SDEV), in her capacity as the Antiquities Authority under the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (the Ordinance) (Cap. 53), after consultation with the Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB) and with the approval of the CE, declared King Yin Lei as a monument by notice in Gazette on 11 July 2008 (see LegCo Brief “Declaration of King Yin Lei at 45 Stubbs Road, Hong Kong as a Monument” issued by the Development Bureau (DEVB) on the same date). The preservation option of King Yin Lei will be implemented through a non-in-situ land exchange which has been approved by the Executive Council (ExCo) on 2 December 2008 (see LegCo Brief “Proposed Non-in-situ Land Exchange for the Preservation of King Yin Lei at 45 Stubbs Road, Hong Kong” issued by DEVB on the same date). Upon implementation of the preservation option, the owner will restore King Yin Lei to the satisfaction of AMO and at his own expense and surrender it to Government for preservation and revitalisation, while Government will grant an adjacent lot to the owner for private residential development. The restoration works of King Yin Lei is expected to complete by the end of 2010. We note the wide public interests to have access into King Yin Lei to enjoy its architecture and to learn about its history. We shall consult the public and devise suitable proposals for its revitalisation.

(2) Financial Assistance on Maintenance of Privately-owned Historic Buildings

10. In the past, Government only provided financial assistance for monuments, but such financial assistance did not cover graded historic buildings under private ownership. To provide incentives for proper maintenance of historic buildings in private hands, we launched the Financial Assistance for Maintenance Scheme in August 2008 providing financial assistance in the form of grant to owners of privately-owned graded historic

buildings for them to carry out maintenance works. Initially, the ceiling of each grant will be \$600,000. For quality assurance, owners will normally be required to employ specialist contractors with heritage expertise to carry out the maintenance works. The applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis, subject to the assessment of a vetting panel and availability of funding. Factors such as the historic value of the building concerned and urgency of works, etc. will be considered if it is necessary to prioritise the applications. As a condition for receiving the financial assistance, Government will require the owners to agree to certain conditions, for example, to allow reasonable public access to the buildings for appreciation and not to demolish the buildings. As at end November 2008, two applications have been received and are being processed. With the experience in processing the applications, we shall in due course review the Scheme and if necessary, seek additional funding for the next financial year.

(C) Major Heritage Conservation Projects

(1) Original Site of the Central School (Former Hollywood Road Police Married Quarters Site)

11. In the 2007-08 Policy Address, the CE announced that the Site would be removed from the List of Sites for Sale by Application (Application List) for one year pending proposals on its revitalisation. Since then, we have conducted various studies, consulted the Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs Sub-committee on Heritage Conservation on 22 February 2008 (see LC Paper No. CB(2)1105/07-08(03)) and embarked on a public engagement exercise from February to May 2008 (including two open days and a public forum) to gauge the community's views on how best the Site should be revitalised. Taking into account the views collected in the public engagement exercise, the CE announced in his 2008-09 Policy Address Government's decision to formally remove the Site from the Application List and revitalise it for creative industries and education purposes.

12. The historical significance of the Site lies in the fact that it is the original site of Central School. The Site has the potential to form a heritage cluster with many other historic sites in Central and Sheung Wan. It is also suitable for arts, culture and tourism related developments because of its proximity to the Hollywood Road antique shops and galleries area and the colourful SoHo and Lan Kwai Fong areas. The views collected in the public engagement exercise also supported revitalising the Site for heritage conservation cum creative industries and tourism purposes. By so doing, it not only takes into account the historical significance of the Site and the characteristics of the neighbouring area, but will also meet the community's

need for more quality public open space and help create synergies amongst the Site and various heritage, cultural and tourist spots in the area.

13. To take the project forward, we propose to conduct an Expression of Interest (EOI) exercise in early 2009 to solicit innovative ideas on revitalising the Site. The EOI exercise should be as open as possible in order to bring in creativity of the private sector and gauge market interest. Details of the views expressed by the community in the public engagement exercise are set out in Annex A.

(2) Central Police Station Compound

14. Following Government's announcement in the 2007-08 Policy Address that it had accepted in principle the conceptual proposal of the Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC) for revitalising the Central Police Station (CPS) Compound, HKJC conducted a six-month public engagement exercise from October 2007 to April 2008 to engage stakeholders through various channels and activities. The public engagement exercise has been very comprehensive, comprising a total of 56 meetings with organisations, individuals and members of the public to collect their views. In response to public views that more effort should be devoted to researching the history, heritage and architectural significance of the CPS Compound and how these should be best preserved, HKJC commissioned Purcell Miller Tritton, a renowned British firm of conservation architects, in January 2008 to undertake a research into the history of the CPS Compound and to prepare a Conservation Management Plan (CMP).

15. Taking into account the results of the six-month public engagement exercise and the CMP, the ExCo approved on 15 July 2008 that Government should enter into a partnership with HKJC to take forward the conservation and revitalisation of the CPS Compound based on a number of parameters (as set out in Annex B) (also see LegCo Brief "Conservation and Revitalisation of the Central Police Station Compound: The Hong Kong Jockey Club's Proposal" issued by DEVB on the same date). HKJC is now working with its architects to come up with a revised conceptual design which will address the various concerns raised during the public engagement process. HKJC and its conservation architects also consulted the AAB on 26 November 2008. The project will need to go through statutory procedures, including those under the Town Planning Ordinance and the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance. The public will have further opportunities to express their views.

(3) Commercial usage of historic buildings

16. There are different means to revitalise historic buildings. Besides

the social enterprise mode of operation with the support of government subsidies, commercial mode of operation may also be pursued for historic buildings with good commercial potential. In the coming year, we will also explore various options of making best use of historic buildings considered to have good commercial potential. In particular, we are planning to invite EOI for the commercial adaptive re-use of Haw Par Mansion. A possibility is to make use of the Mansion for, but not limited to, wine-related facilities to help promote the development of wine industry in Hong Kong.

(D) Heritage Conservation – Point, Line, Plane (點、線、面)

(1) Revitalisation of old Wan Chai

17. In his 2007-08 Policy Address, the CE tasked DEVB and URA to jointly adopt a new way of thinking and a district-based approach when considering preservation and revitalisation of the old Wan Chai area. This signifies that heritage conservation is no longer limited to the preservation of historic buildings in a piecemeal manner, but should be based on a small area so as to preserve the local characteristics. Following consultation with the Wan Chai District Council (WCDC) in January 2008, an Old Wan Chai Revitalisation Initiatives Special Committee comprising members of the WCDC, experts on heritage conservation and revitalisation, and representatives from DEVB and URA, was established. Its mission is to map out the overall plan for revitalising old Wan Chai. Some initiatives that the Special Committee is pursuing include beautification of the open-air bazaars at Tai Yuen Street, Cross Street and Gresson Street, introduction of a public-private partnership scheme for revitalising old Wan Chai, and development of historical and heritage trails.

(2) Preservation and Revitalisation of Blue House Cluster

18. Under the new conservation concept, we have also adopted an alternative approach for the Blue House project in Wan Chai which emphasises conservation of the “community network” in the Blue House cluster so that “both the heritage buildings and the existing community are retained”. We have acquired, through the Hong Kong Housing Society (HKHS), one of the two building blocks of the Blue House cluster under private ownership and offered rehousing or compensation to those eligible tenants or occupants who choose to move out of the cluster. For those who would like to stay behind, they will become key elements in the future conservation plan for the cluster. We will further consult the WCDC on the resumption of the remaining private building block in the cluster in January 2009. On completion of the acquisition and re-housing arrangement, the HKHS will hand the cluster over to Government for incorporation into DEVB’s Revitalising Historical Buildings

Through Partnership Scheme. Non-profit-making organisations will be invited to submit conservation and revitalisation proposals capable of preserving and revitalising the buildings and retaining the local community network.

(3) Revitalisation of Hollywood Road

19. As we have explained above, the Original Site of the Central School (Former Hollywood Road Police Married Quarters Site) will be removed from the Application List for revitalisation for educational use and promotion of creative industries. To tie in with this Government conservation initiative, URA has proposed to optimise the design option of Staunton Street/Wing Lee Street project to manifest the street ambience and the heritage significance of the locality, visually connect the two sites and generate a full synergy effect.

20. Under this conservation-led redevelopment approach, URA's originally proposed high-rise residential tower above the Bridges Street Market will be given up to create visual connection amongst the Original Site of the Central School, the junction of Staunton Street, Shing Wong Street and Wing Lee Street, giving full respect to the vista of the locality. The terrace ambience on Wing Lee Street will be maintained by preserving three tenement buildings and recreating new low-rise buildings with the similar typology, height and scale of the existing tenement buildings on that terrace. To further enhance the accessibility to the adjoining Victorian stone pitch wall at the back of Wing Lee Street, the tenement buildings of poor condition at Shing Wong Street will be rebuilt with setback at the ground floor level. A small plaza will be created at the junction of Wing Lee Street and Shing Wong Street to enhance visibility to the stone wall. As a result of the proposed changes, this conservation-led redevelopment project will reduce the approved plot ratio from 8 to not more than 4.5.

(E) Institutional Arrangements, Research and Public Education

(1) Setting Up of a Commissioner for Heritage's Office

21. The post of the Commissioner for Heritage (C for H) was created and filled in April 2008 to provide dedicated support to SDEV in implementing the policy on heritage conservation and keeping it under constant review, taking forward a series of initiatives as well as serving as a focal point of contact, both local and overseas. The C for H's Office is taking forward the various initiatives set out in this paper.

(2) Public Engagement and Publicity

22. Fulfilling Government's commitment to proactively engage the public to ensure that stakeholders' views are taken into account in our heritage conservation work, we have launched a series of public engagement and publicity programmes on heritage conservation in 2008, comprising the following –

- (a) public engagement sessions on revitalisation projects – we conducted public briefing sessions and open days in early 2008 for the launch of the Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme. We also conducted a three-month public engagement exercise to gauge public views on the revitalisation of the Original Site of Central School;
- (b) public awareness campaign on heritage conservation – we organised a series of activities from January to May 2008 to promote public awareness and strengthen community support for heritage conservation. These activities included a photo competition, thematic exhibitions, roving exhibitions, public lectures and seminars, guided tours, etc. These activities had altogether attracted over 62,000 visitors;
- (c) dedicated heritage website – we launched a dedicated web site on heritage conservation (www.heritage.gov.hk) in January 2008, which has received a total of over 286,000 hits as to November 2008; and
- (d) heritage newsletter – we have published a bimonthly newsletter “活化@Heritage” since June 2008 to feature topics of public concern and work of the C for H's Office.

23. We are drawing up the public engagement and publicity plan on heritage conservation in 2009 which will target at our youth and students. The following activities are being considered –

- (a) To conduct a survey on youth and students knowledge of and aspiration on heritage;
- (b) To launch a drawing competition on historic buildings for students and to produce postcards of winning entries;
- (c) To explore arrangements for schools and public bodies to tour and hold activities at historic buildings; and

- (d) To launch an audio/visual production competition for students on promotion of heritage conservation.

(3) Review on the Relationship between Declaration and Grading

24. Apart from King Yin Lei, two more historic buildings have been declared monuments under the Ordinance in year 2008. They are Maryknoll Convent School and Green Island Lighthouses Compound. Moreover, we have completed a review on the relationship between the statutory monument declaration system under the Ordinance and the administrative grading system of historic buildings under the AAB. The AAB has endorsed, at its meeting on 26 November 2008, establishment of a formal relationship between the two systems. The gist of the framework is set out in Annex C.

25. The new framework has clearly defined the role of AAB and the relationship between grading and monument declaration. AAB will now focus on “heritage significance” as the only relevant consideration, while other relevant factors in the overall community interest will be matters that the Administration, not AAB, should deal with. The list of Grade I buildings will be regarded as providing a “pool” of highly valuable historic buildings for consideration by the Antiquities Authority for possible monument declaration. The Antiquities Authority will readily declare Grade I buildings as proposed monuments when these buildings are under threat of demolition. This would give highly graded historic buildings immediate protection. We will inform the owners of Grade I buildings about the status and historical significance of their buildings; their eligibility to apply for financial assistance from Government for maintenance of their buildings; the likely Government intervention in case the buildings are under demolition threat (such as proposed monument declaration by the Antiquities Authority in order to provide immediate but temporary protection to their buildings); and a willingness to discuss with the owners possible economic incentives for the preservation of their buildings on a case-by-case basis depending on the merits of each case. Information about Grade I as well as Grade II and III buildings will be publicly accessible via the heritage and AMO web sites. A formal relationship is thereby established between the two systems. In the meantime, the comprehensive grading of some 1,440 historic buildings will be completed shortly, with the initial results expected to be available by early 2009.

(4) Research, Studies and Awards

26. During the year, SDEV and her colleagues have taken advantage of official visits and attending conferences both overseas and in the Mainland to meet with their heritage counterparts in the UK, Australia, Singapore, New

York, Shanghai, Macao and Nanjing. We have also taken the opportunity to have a symposium and a conference meeting with the Australian Heritage to hear their experiences on heritage conservation during their visit to Hong Kong in November 2008. We have conducted a consultancy study on overseas experience of revitalisation of historic buildings and a consultancy study on overseas experiences on building controls to facilitate adaptive re-use of historic buildings. The study results will be useful for us in formulating our future revitalisation schemes.

27. Hong Kong's heritage conservation work has won United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards (an internationally recognised award for heritage conservation) over the years. Little Hong Kong at the former Central Ordnance Munitions Depot won the Award of Merit in 2007 while the Hong Kong Heritage Discovery Centre at the former Whitfield Barracks won the Jury Commendation for Innovation in 2007 and the Bethanie Campus of the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts won the Honourable Mention in 2008. A list of historic buildings in Hong Kong receiving UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards for Culture Heritage Conservation in the past years is attached at Annex D.

28. We are studying the operational model of heritage trusts in overseas countries, with a view to gathering useful experiences considering their appropriateness to our local conditions. As we have explained earlier, a heritage trust will be more long term and would be pursued only after other initiatives on heritage conservation have been well in place (say several years down the road).

ADVICE SOUGHT

29. Members are invited to note the above progress and offer their advice on the way forward.

**Development Bureau
December 2008**

Annex A

Revitalisation of the Original Site of the Central School (Former Hollywood Road Policy Married Quarters Site)

Findings of Public Engagement Exercise

During and after the public engagement exercise, the community had expressed the following common views –

- (a) support the preservation of the historical relics in the Site and manifestation of its heritage value and the ambience;
- (b) support a holistic planning approach that will take into account the history of the Site and the characteristics of the area along Hollywood Road;
- (c) show great interest in revitalising the Site for public use, especially for arts, culture, creative industries and tourism;
- (d) oppose large-scale residential development on this Site;
- (e) demand more public open space on this Site;
- (f) consider Central School the most significant value of the Site; and
- (g) request public access to the Site after revitalisation.

2. The community however showed no clear preference for whether to keep or demolish all or any of the three existing buildings within the Site, i.e. the two quarters blocks and a two-storey Junior Police Call building.

Annex B

Revitalisation of the Central Police Station Compound

The parameters for partnership between Government and the Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC) on the conservation and revitalisation of the Central Police Station (CPS) Compound project as approved by the Executive Council on 15 July 2008 are as follows –

- (A) The objective of the project is to achieve both conservation and revitalisation of this highly important heritage site and to take the opportunity to showcase in Hong Kong how new and sustainable uses can be integrated creatively into a historic site whilst preserving its overall historic and architectural significance;
- (B) To reflect the historical significance of the site and establish sustainable new uses, the project should provide within the CPS Compound, inter alia, a law and order museum and various arts and cultural facilities including a modest size auditorium, a black-box theatre, a gallery/lecture hall, gallery/exhibition space and ancillary facilities. No observation deck will be provided;
- (C) Given the physical constraints of the existing buildings, the recommendations of the Conservation Management Plan and the objective to establish new and sustainable uses, a new structure will be built within the site to accommodate the above facilities;
- (D) The height and bulk of the new structure should be suitably reduced from that previously proposed to address concerns and views collected during the public engagement exercise but the opportunity should be taken to create an architectural piece that will put Hong Kong on par with overseas and Mainland cities with reputable contemporary architecture;
- (E) The restoration, conservation and development of the historic site and buildings in the CPS Compound will have to follow the requirements set by the Antiquities Authority and the project will be subject to the relevant statutory processes; and
- (F) The site and buildings will be made available, but not granted, to HKJC which will undertake all renovation, conversion and new built works as well as manage, operate and maintain the CPS Compound as a turnkey project at its own expenses to be presented as a gift to the people of Hong Kong.

Gist of the Formal Relationship Established Between the Statutory Monument Declaration System and the Administrative Grading System

Current situation

Under the present system, the Antiquities Authority (i.e. Secretary for Development), after consultation with the AAB and with the approval of the Chief Executive, may declare a place or a building as monument under section 3(1) of the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (Cap 53).

2. On the other hand, over the years, the AAB with the assistance of the Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO) has been grading historic buildings, based on an administrative system which classifies buildings into Grade I, II and III. There has been no automatic linkage or direct correlation between the grading system and the monument declaration system.

New Arrangements

3. Under the endorsed arrangements –
- (a) the list of Grade I buildings, defined as “buildings of outstanding merit, which every effort should be made to preserve if possible” will be regarded as providing a pool of highly valuable heritage buildings for consideration by the Antiquities Authority as to whether some of these may have reached the “high threshold” of monuments to be put under statutory protection;
 - (b) the Antiquities Authority is committed to actively considering each and every of the Grade I buildings for possible monument declaration. Given the resources required, the Authority will naturally have to prioritise the list of Grade I buildings for consideration, based on such factors as the buildings’ heritage significance, demolition risks, the owners’ and the public’s aspirations, and ownership of the buildings; and
 - (c) the Commissioner for Heritage’s Office will take the initiative to inform private owners of Grade I buildings the status and historical significance of their buildings; their eligibility to apply for financial assistance from Government for maintenance of their buildings; the likely Government intervention in case the buildings are under

demolition threat, such as proposed monument declaration by the Antiquities Authority in order to provide immediate but temporary protection to their buildings; and a willingness to discuss with the owners possible economic incentives for the preservation of their buildings on a case-by-case basis depending on the merits of each case.

4. It should be emphasised that such a linkage would not oblige the Antiquities Authority to declare all Grade I buildings as monuments. The building to be declared as a monument must reach the “high threshold”, and other factors will also need to be taken into account.

5. For Grade II and Grade III buildings, Government recognises the aspiration of the community to take appropriate actions to preserve them. We would take the view that the buildings should be preserved in such a way which is commensurate with the merits of the buildings concerned, and priority would be given to those with higher heritage value.

Annex D

**List of Historic Buildings in Hong Kong receiving
UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards for Culture Heritage Conservation
in the past years**

No.	Project	Award	Year
1	Hung Shing Temple, Kau Sai Chau, Sai Kung, New Territories	Outstanding Project	2000
2.	Ohel Leah Synagogue, Robinson Road, Hong Kong	Outstanding Project	2000
3.	King Law Ka Shuk Study Hall, Tai Po Tau Village, Tai Po, New Territories	Award of Merit	2001
4.	Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Central, Hong Kong	Honourable Mention	2003
5.	St. Joseph's Chapel, Yim Tin Tsai Island, Hong Kong	Award of Merit	2005
6.	Tung Wah Coffin Home, Hong Kong Island, Hong Kong	Award of Merit	2005
7.	St. Andrew's Church, Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon	Award of Merit	2006
8.	Liu Ying Lung Study Hall, Sheung Shui, New Territories	Honourable Mention	2006
9.	Little Hong Kong at the former Central Ordnance Munitions Depot, Hong Kong	Award of Merit	2007
10.	Hong Kong Heritage Discovery Centre at the former Whitfield Barracks, Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon	Jury Commendation for Innovation	2007
11.	Bethanie Campus of the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, Pok Fu Lam, Hong Kong	Honourable Mention	2008