

**For discussion
on 12 May 2009**

LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

**Proposed New Columbarium
and Garden of Remembrance at Kiu Tau Road, Wo Hop Shek**

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the proposed project to construct a new columbarium and Garden of Remembrance (GoR) at Kiu Tau Road within the Wo Hop Shek (WHS) Cemetery.

Background

2. With a growing and aging population in Hong Kong, the number of deaths and the corresponding number of cremations have been rising gradually year on year. The number of deaths and cremations in 2007 were 39 963 and 34 427 respectively and those for 2008 were 41 530 (deaths) and 36 410 (cremations). With an increasing demand for cremation service, there is also an increasing need for the supply of niches.

3. At present, in addition to the columbarium facilities run by non-government organisations (e.g. the Board of Management of Chinese Permanent Cemeteries), religious entities and the private sector, there are a total of eight public columbaria managed by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) providing some 167 900 public niches. For cost and other reasons, there has been a strong demand for public niches.

4. To enhance provision of public columbarium facilities, we have recently completed the construction of 3 374 additional niches at the Kwai Chung Columbarium and 18 500 new niches at the Diamond Hill Columbarium. At the same time, FEHD has been actively promoting alternative ways of handling cremains, such as scattering of ashes at designated sea waters within the territory and scattering of cremains at GoRs. FEHD introduced simplified procedures for scattering of ashes at designated sea waters in July 2007. Since then, the Department has processed over 400 applications, representing a rather significant increase compared with a total of 44 such applications before the new application system was put in place. Similarly, for GoRs, the Department has processed some 700 applications since 2007, compared with an average of less than 30 cases each year in the years before that. With the growing acceptance of the general public, the results have been encouraging. In view of this, we have recently refurbished the GoRs at Kwai Chung and Fu Shan Crematoria to provide more choices for the public.

5. Given the very limited land supply and different views of the public on constructing columbarium facilities, the Government and the community will have to explore more innovative means of handling cremains. We may need to seriously consider whether providing niches for public use on a permanent basis is the best practice and whether new practices should be introduced to meet the public demand.

The Kiu Tau Road Project

6. The proposed project is to develop a new columbarium at Kiu Tau Road within the WHS Cemetery to provide some 37 000 niches and a GoR for completion by July 2012.

7. The proposed site is an old coffin burial ground covering an area of 3.6 hectares. As it is situated within the WHS Cemetery, it could be developed readily without incurring additional time and resource for building new supporting infrastructure. The location map of the site is at **Annex A**. In addition, the site, in the form of a basin with trees and rich vegetation along the surrounding terraces is shielded off by natural terrain and hence will have minimal visual impact on the nearby environment.

8. We will make full use of the natural setting of this site and minimize the need for extensive geotechnical works. The flat land in the middle of the basin will be used to construct a five-storey columbarium block while the surrounding terrains will be used to construct outdoor niches. There will be a GoR at the northeast corner as well as near the entrance by making use of the vegetated terraces for development. Existing trees and vegetation growing along the surrounding terraces will be preserved as far as possible to embrace the new columbarium and screen it off to minimize the negative visual impact of the new facilities. The entire layout is planned with a view to be as environmentally friendly as possible by minimising possible disturbance to the existing landscape. Environmental features, such as vertical greening, roof garden and rainwater recycling system for irrigation will be provided in this project.

Project scope

9. The scope of the project comprises reinforcement of the slopes/terrains, construction of a new five-storey columbarium building, a single-storey administration block, around 7 000 outdoor niches, GoR with memorial stones/pillars and other ancillary facilities.

The columbarium and administration block

10. The proposed five-storey columbarium building will provide for about 30 000 public niches. There will also be a single storey administration block near the entrance of the development. The major facilities are as follows -

- (a) public entrance area with water features;
- (b) staircase and covered walkway leading from the columbarium to different level of outdoor niches along the terrain;
- (c) loading and unloading areas for vehicles;
- (d) three passenger lifts;
- (e) supporting facilities including administration office, public toilets, refuse chutes, store rooms, plant rooms, benches;
- (f) public address system and closed circuit television system;
- (g) communal eco-friendly joss burning facilities at different locations in the open space outside the columbarium¹;
- (h) an electronic search and file facility; and
- (i) roof-top greening.

Outdoor niches and GoR

11. The existing terrace profile to the northeast of the site and near the entrance will be conveniently turned into outdoor niches and GoR. A total of about 7 000 single-storey niches will be built along the slopes as outdoor niche at various levels of existing terraces. At the northeast corner and near the entrance, there will be natural lawns and trees for use as GoR for scattering of cremains. In memory of the deceased whose ashes are scattered in the GoR, we will provide a variety of memorial structures, for example, low pillars, short memorial walls, or stone memorial books which allow simple inscriptions of the deceased with just their names and the dates of birth/death. The design theme of the GoR is to blend with the natural environment while allowing wider use of the GoR.

¹ Joss paper burning will be prohibited inside the columbarium building.

12. An artist impression of the development is at **Annex B**. The total capital cost of the project is estimated at \$630 million (in money-of-the-day price).

Electronic search and the E-memorial book

13. Given the large number of niches on this site and the different locations of the niches, some indoor and some outdoor, some members of the public may have difficulty in locating the niche position of the deceased. In this regard, we plan to set up computer kiosks in the administration block with a view to enabling the public to locate the niche of the deceased through an electronic map. The location and numbering of all niches on this site will be electronically recorded. Coupled with the personal particulars of the deceased which are also recorded electronically in one system, we could provide a quick search facility for the family by simply inputting say, the name of the deceased or his/her date of birth/death in order to locate the exact position of the niche.

14. For others who wish to pay memorial service to the deceased whose ashes have been scattered in the GoR, as the memorial wall/stone will only record the name and birth/death dates so as to make the best use of the limited space, we will set up a supporting E-memorial book which will allow other personal particulars of the deceased, including photos, be stored in a dedicated memorial page. The E-memorial book facility will be provided at the administration block where the public has access. By inputting the name and birth/death dates of the deceased, the family / relatives / friends may access the memorial page of the deceased with a password. They may browse through the page or pay respect through simulation, such as burning of incense, offering flowers, or leaving messages in the memorial page of the book. We will set up appropriate data protection device in the system.

Public consultation

15. We consulted the WHS village representatives on the columbarium project on 26 February 2008. They had no objection to the project but expressed concern over the height of the new columbarium block. They asked that the building should be kept below the ridge line of the terrain to minimize visual impact to villagers living in the vicinity.

16. We consulted the North District Council on the project on 17 March 2008. Members agreed that the Government need to provide affordable niches to meet public demand. They noted that the site was fairly concealed from the visual point of view and that the proposed design of the columbarium would further minimize visual and psychological impact on the local community. They raised no objection to the project but shared the views of the village representatives regarding the height of the columbarium building. We have taken into account these views in designing the columbarium block as a low-rise structure.

Traffic Impact Assessment

17. A traffic impact assessment (TIA) consultancy study was conducted to assess the traffic impact of the proposed project. The TIA consultant considered the proposed development feasible in terms of traffic considerations, and concluded that the additional pedestrian and vehicular traffic impact arising from the proposed project would not significantly affect the performance of the key junctions and walkways in the WHS Cemetery, provided that current special traffic and crowd control arrangements during peak periods would continue to apply. FEHD will continue to work closely with the Police and other relevant departments in the implementation of effective traffic and crowd control measures during the grave sweeping festivals after commissioning the proposed project.

Implementation programme

18. We plan to make a submission to the Public Works Subcommittee to upgrade the proposed project to Category A of the Public Works Programme in June 2009 and to seek funding approval from the Finance Committee in July 2009. Construction works are expected to commence in December 2009 for completion in July 2012.

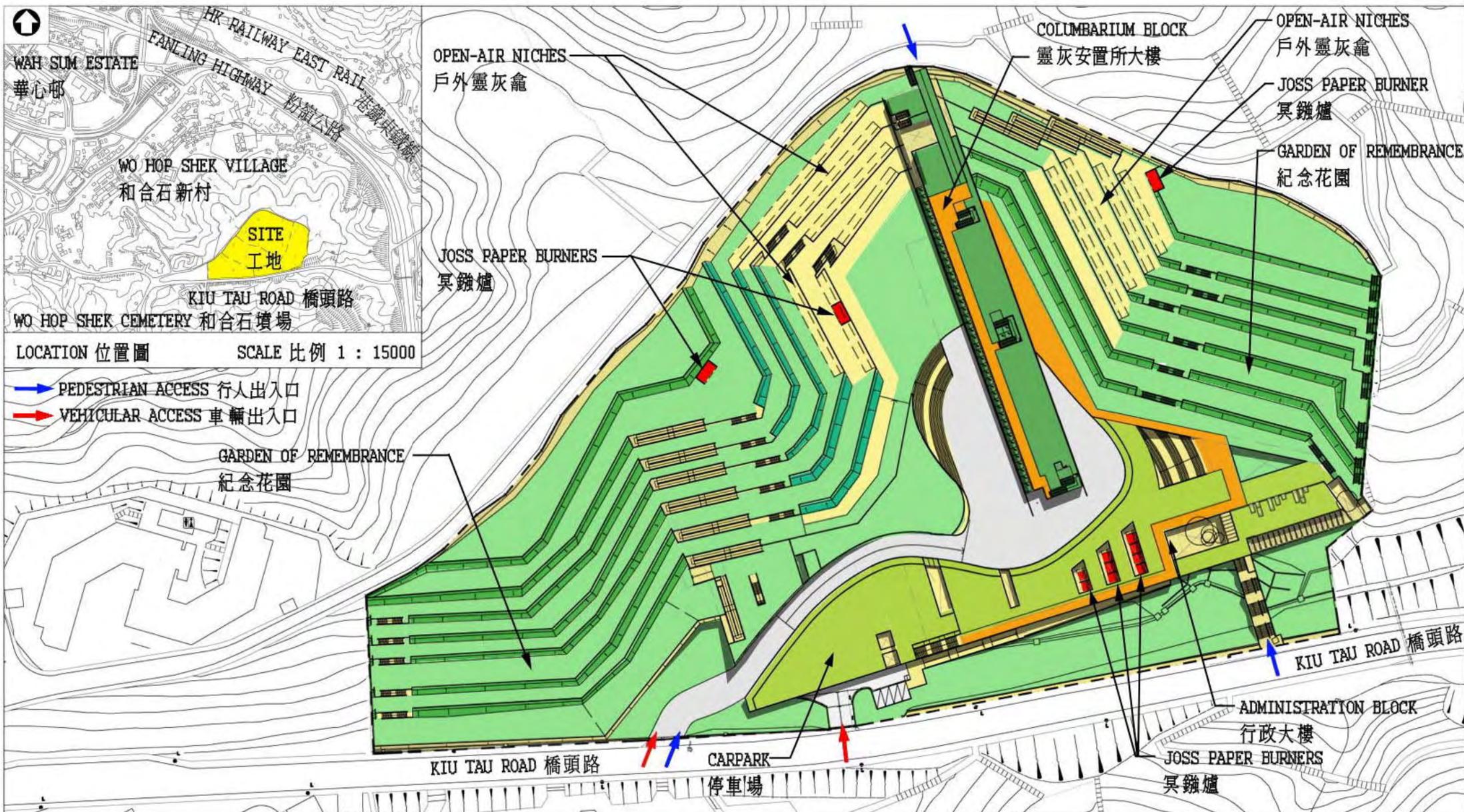
Advice sought

19. Members are invited to comment on the proposed project.

Food and Health Bureau
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
May 2009

工地平面圖
SITE LOCATION PLAN

附件 A ANNEX A



PWP NO. 017NB
 工程項目：
 Project Title:
 在和合石橋頭路設置靈灰安置所及紀念花園
 PROVISION OF COLUMBARIUM AND GARDEN OF
 REMEMBRANCE AT KIU TAU ROAD, WO HOP SHEK

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Date	April, 2009
Date	April, 2009

drawing no.	scale
AB/6936/XA001	1 : 1500

ARCHITECTURAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT



從西南面望向靈灰安置所及紀念花園的構思圖

VIEW OF THE COLUMBARIUM AND GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE FROM SOUTH-WEST DIRECTION (ARTIST'S IMPRESSION)

附件 B ANNEX B



PWP NO. 017NB 工程項目： Project Title: 在和合石橋頭路設置靈灰安置所及紀念花園 PROVISION OF COLUMBARIUM AND GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE AT KIU TAU ROAD, WO HOP SHEK	drawn by W.K. CHAN	Date April, 2009	drawing no. AB/6936/XA004	scale N.T.S.
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	office ARCHITECTURAL BRANCH			