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Panel on Development

Meeting on 22 November 2011

**Updated background brief on redevelopment scheme
for the West Wing of the Central Government Offices**

Purpose

This paper provides background information on the Administration's redevelopment scheme for the West Wing of Central Government Offices ("the CGO West Wing"), and summarized members' concerns and views on relevant issues.

The "Conserving Central" initiative

2. The Chief Executive ("CE") announced the "Conserving Central" initiative in his 2009-2010 Policy Address, which aims to preserve social, historical and architectural features in Central while adding new life and vibrancy to the area. The eight projects under "Conserving Central" are --

- (a) New Central Harbourfront;
- (b) Central Market;
- (c) Former Police Married Quarters on Hollywood Road;
- (d) Central Police Station Compound;
- (e) Central Government Offices;
- (f) Murray Building;

- (g) Former French Mission Building; and
- (h) Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui Compound.

3. The Administration briefed the Panel on Development ("the Panel") on the "Conserving Central" initiative at the meeting on 27 April 2010. The Panel further discussed the subject with the Administration on 25 May 2010. In respect of the CGO project, the CGO site covers an area about 1.81 hectares, and is located in the core of the Central Business District and falls within a "Government, Institution or Community ("GIC") zone on the draft Central District Outline Zoning Plan No. S/H4/13 ("the OZP"). The CGO buildings comprise of the Main, East and West Wings. The Administration's plan is to preserve the Main and East Wing for the use by the Department of Justice and demolish and redevelop the West Wing.

Redevelopment scheme for the West Wing of the Central Government Offices

4. In view of relocation of offices in the CGO buildings to the new Central Government Complex at Tamar by the end of 2011, the Antiquities and Monuments Office has commissioned conservation architects to conduct a historical and architectural appraisal of the CGO buildings. The Appraisal, completed in September 2009, recommended the preservation of the Main and East Wings for appropriate new uses and the demolition of the CGO West Wing (which has been assessed as having low historic and architectural value), and suggested that part of the West Wing site be developed as a public park.

5. On 26 October 2010, the Administration briefed the Panel on the proposed scheme to redevelop the CGO West Wing. The major features of the proposed scheme included --

- (a) Development of over two-thirds of the CGO West Wing site in the eastern portion into a public open space with an area of about 6 800 m², and the remaining one-third at the western end into a commercial building providing total gross floor area ("GFA") of 28 500 m² Grade A office and a shopping centre of GFA of 13 500 m².
- (b) The new public open space would become an integral part of a greenery network linking the natural green slopes from the

Government House down to Ice House Street and Battery Path.

- (c) The lower part of the proposed commercial building would be covered by a green façade with vegetation, and together with the vegetated slopes along Battery Path, would become a green focus in Central. Part of the shopping centre and the car parking and loading/unloading facilities would be accommodated through excavation below the Lower Albert Road level; and
- (d) To ensure that the future development would be compatible with the surrounding developments, a building height restriction of 150mPD would be imposed. Moreover, the CGO West Wing site will be rezoned from "GIC" to "Comprehensive Development Area" ("CDA") in the OZP. In future, developers of the office tower and commercial arcade would be required to submit a Master Layout Plan and other technical assessments for consideration by the Town Planning Board ("TPB").

6. To collect views from the public and interested parties on the proposed redevelopment of the CGO West Wing, the Administration conducted a public consultation from September to end of December 2010 which included an exhibition of the proposed scheme and briefing sessions to the Central and Western District Council and relevant professional institutions.

7. On 12 October 2011, CE announced in his 2011-2012 Policy Address a revised redevelopment scheme for the CGO West Wing. Under the revised proposal, the public open space to be provided would be expanded while the size of the shopping arcade would be significantly reduced. Part of the new commercial complex would be set aside to accommodate the Securities and Future Commission ("SFC") and the Hong Kong Stock Exchange ("HKSE") so as to enhance Central's image as a core financial district.

Discussion by the Panel on Development in 2010

8. The Panel discussed with the Administration the proposed redevelopment scheme for the CGO West Wing at the meeting on 26 October 2010. A special meeting was held on 23 November 2010 to

receive views from deputations. The major views and concerns expressed by members and parties are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

Ownership of the site

9. Some members and deputations such as conservation groups expressed grave concern over the demolition of the CGO West Wing. They felt strongly that since the Government Hill was a place of political, religious and military significance, any move to "break it up" would adversely affect the completeness of an important landmark which had been in existence for over 150 years. They believed that carrying a strong symbolic value, the Government Hill belonged to the Hong Kong people and should not be sold to give way for private developments. There was grave concern that the Administration could not regulate private developments in an effective way within the CGO West Wing site in future, and that the redevelopment scheme would repeat the bitter experiences of private developments in CDAs, such as Cheung Kong Centre and the Former Marine Police Headquarters. Some members urged the Administration to withdraw the proposal and preserve the Government Hill. There was a suggestion to turn the West Wing into an archive for displaying Hong Kong's past and future infrastructure developments.

10. On the other hand, some members and professional groups and redevelopment concern groups expressed support for the redevelopment scheme. There were views that Hong Kong should be highly selective in selecting best historic sites/buildings for conservation, and the retention of the East and Main Wings of the CGO Complex, which was of higher historical and architectural value in comparison with the West Wing, would achieve the conservation purpose. Members and some redevelopment concern groups welcomed the provision of public open space but urged the Administration to consider retaining ownership of the site.

11. The Administration maintained that its redevelopment proposal was intended to satisfy both conservation and development needs of Central. It disagreed that the redevelopment scheme would "break up" the Government Hill. With a large public open space coming to light, an integral part of the Government Hill would actually be "restored to" its previous condition before the buildings were built. The Administration pointed out that a major merit of the CDA zoning was the presence of comprehensive planning control on the proposed development within it. Development parameters would be laid down in the relevant OZP and the planning brief for developers to follow. Hence, it would be difficult for developers to change the planning concept. Besides, TPB would carefully examine the Master

Layout Plan and other assessments submitted by the developers to ensure that the new developments would not be incompatible with the surrounding environment.

Proposed construction of a commercial building

12. While members supported the provision of more Grade A offices through the redevelopment scheme to make up the longstanding shortfall, they had reservation over the construction of a shopping centre on the site. A number of redevelopment and environmental concern groups also worried that the multi-storey commercial building to be constructed would create "wall effect", increase traffic flow and worsen air quality, thus bringing negative impacts on the environment of Central. Some members and deputations had suggested turning the entire West Wing site into a public open space. There was also a suggestion from a member that the Administration should consider leasing out the lower floors of the shopping mall to statutory bodies, such as the Equal Opportunities Commission ("EOC") and Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Personal Data ("OPCPD").

13. The Administration stressed that there was a pressing need for the Administration to address the acute shortage of Grade A office. All private developments within the CGO West Wing site, falling within CDA, would be subject to a set of development parameters, and TPB would carefully examine the Master Layout Plans to be submitted by the developers. Nonetheless, the Administration was willing to reconsider the shopping centre proposal in the light of members' feedbacks. It had pointed out that there would be difficulty for the Administration to regulate the intake of occupants of the office building which would be a private development.

Provision of environment-friendly facilities and communal facilities at the site

14. Some members requested the Administration to consider providing more environment-friendly facilities in the Government Hill and Central through the CGO West Wing redevelopment scheme, for instance, the construction of cycle tracks as well as parking facilities for bicycles and environmental vehicles. Moreover, the Administration should explore the possibility of providing stalls and related facilities in the redeveloped CGO West Wing site for social enterprises to operate.

15. The Administration advised that in the past few years, it had invested over \$200 million in constructing a 110-kilometre cycle track network in the New Territories. A great deal of efforts had been made to encourage the use of bicycles by the public. On the use of bicycles as a means of transportation to alleviate traffic instead of a form of leisure, further discussion with the Transport and Housing Bureau would be necessary. As regards the suggestion of providing stalls in the redeveloped site for operation of social enterprises, the Administration advised that this would involve the management of public open space in private development ("POSPD"). Although there would be management guidelines for POSPD, the provision of stalls would depend largely on the facilities available in POSPD. The matter could be pursued by the Home Affairs Bureau to see whether there could be concrete proposals in this aspect.

Revised proposal put forward in the 2011-2012 Policy Address

16. During the Administration's briefing to the Panel on CE's 2011-2012 Policy Address on 14 October 2011, some members enquired about how the Administration would respond to public aspirations not to bring in Grade A office tower in the redevelopment scheme for the CGO West Wing. A member opined that the Administration should consider accommodating the offices of EOC and OPCPD at the site.

17. The Administration advised that the mainstream view received during the public consultation indicated support to provide more Grade A offices in Central in order to alleviate the existing acute shortage. The Administration had taken on board public views in revising the redevelopment scheme by expanding the open space and significantly reducing the size of the shopping arcade. On the suggestion to bring in the offices of EOC and OPCPD in the new complex, the Administration explained that as it was among the objectives of the redevelopment scheme to create synergy effects with the surrounding environment and to enhance Central's status and image as a core financial centre, the organizations to be accommodated in the new complex would depend whether they would have a strong case to operate in Central.

Recent development

18. In paragraph 141 of the 2011-2012 Policy Address delivered on 12 October 2011, CE announced a revised plan on the redevelopment of the

CGO West Wing site. According to the information provided by the Administration, the size of the public open space will be increased to about 7 600 m². As for the Grade A office tower, the Administration has invited SFC and HKSE to consider becoming anchor tenants to take up no less than two-thirds of the space in the new office building. The Administration has also decided to replace the proposed shopping centre by GIC and ancillary office uses. To take the redevelopment scheme forward, the Administration will propose amendments to the Central District OZP to rezone the CGO West Wing site from "GIC" to "CDA" for consideration of TPB. The public can make representations and comments on the proposed amendments in accordance with the Town Plan Ordinance¹.

19. The Administration will brief the Panel on the results of the public consultation conducted on the redevelopment scheme, and its further consideration on the scheme on 22 November 2011.

Relevant papers

20. A list of relevant papers with their hyperlinks is in the **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
17 November 2011

¹ Please refer to the paper provided by the Administration for the Panel on Development meeting on 22 Nov 2011.

Redevelopment scheme for the West Wing of the Central Government Offices

List of relevant papers

Date of meeting	Committee	Papers/Minutes of meeting
21 October 2009	Panel on Development	<p>Administration's paper on initiatives of Development Bureau in the 2009-10 Policy Address and Policy Agenda (LC Paper No. CB(1)30/09-10(01)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/dev/papers/dev1021cb1-30-1-e.pdf</p> <p>Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. CB(1)397/09-10) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/dev/minutes/dev20091021.pdf</p>
27 April 2010	Panel on Development	<p>Administration's paper on Conserving Central (LC Paper No. CB(1)1666/09-10(05)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/dev/papers/dev0427cb1-1666-5-e.pdf</p> <p>Paper on heritage conservation prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (Background brief) (LC Paper No. CB(1)1666/09-10(04)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/dev/papers/dev0427cb1-1666-4-e.pdf</p> <p>Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. CB(1)2248/09-10) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/dev/minutes/dev20100427.pdf</p>
25 May 2010	Panel on Development	<p>Motion on "Conserving Central" proposed by Hon KAM Nai-wai at the meeting held on 27 April 2010 (LC Paper No. CB(1)1797/09-10(01)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/chinese/panels/dev/papers/dev0427cb1-1797-1-ec.pdf</p> <p>Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. CB(1)2602/09-10) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/dev/minutes/dev20100525.pdf</p>

Date of meeting	Committee	Papers/Minutes of meeting
26 October 2010	Panel on Development	<p>Administration's paper on Conserving Central (LC Paper No. CB(1)2867/09-10(01)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/dev/papers/devcb1-2867-1-e.pdf</p> <p>Paper on Conserving Central – redevelopment scheme of West Wing, Central Government Offices prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (Background brief) (LC Paper No. CB(1)155/10-11(08)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/dev/papers/dev1026cb1-155-8-e.pdf</p> <p>Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. CB(1)736/10-11) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/dev/minutes/dev20101026.pdf</p>
23 November 2010	Panel on Development	<p>Administration's paper on Conserving Central (LC Paper No. CB(1)2867/09-10(01)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/dev/papers/devcb1-2867-1-e.pdf</p> <p>Paper on Conserving Central – redevelopment scheme of West Wing, Central Government Offices prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (Background brief) (LC Paper No. CB(1)155/10-11(08)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/dev/papers/dev1026cb1-155-8-e.pdf</p> <p>Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. CB(1)1652/10-11) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/dev/minutes/dev20101123a.pdf</p>
14 October 2011	Panel on Development	<p>Administration's paper on initiatives of the Development Bureau in the 2011-2012 Policy Address and Policy Agenda (LC Paper No. CB(1)35/11-12(01)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr11-12/english/panels/dev/papers/dev1014cb1-35-1-e.pdf</p>