

**For discussion
on 17 January 2006**

LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Additional Columbarium at Diamond Hill

PURPOSE

This paper invites Members' views on the proposed project to construct an additional columbarium at Diamond Hill.

BACKGROUND

2. Following population growth, the yearly number of deaths in Hong Kong has increased in the past decade from 30,894 in 1995 to 38,683 in 2005 and is estimated to increase to 47,000 in 2015. Due to limited land supply for coffin burials, the Government has been encouraging the public to adopt cremation in lieu of coffin burials as the means of disposal of dead bodies since the 1970s. The adoption of cremation as a means of disposal of the dead has been rising steadily in the last 30 years from 35% (7,300 cremations) in 1975 to 86% (33,000 cremations) in 2005. The cremation rate is anticipated to rise further in the coming decade and would probably level off at about 90% in 2010s. With an increasing demand for cremation services, there is also an increasing need for the supply of niches.

3. Niches are provided by both the Government and the private sector. The Government manages a total of about 138,000 niches in eight Government columbaria, including 43,310 niches in Diamond Hill Columbarium. As Government niches are heavily subsidized by public funding (and hence in general more economical than those provided by private institutions) and there are membership restrictions on interment in niches provided by religious bodies, etc., there has been a strong demand for Government niches. All new niches provided by the Government were

sold out in March 2005. Presently, only around 100 previously used niches in Government columbaria remain available for sale to the public.

4. To meet the demand in these two years, the Government is now building about 10,000 new niches in small patches of unused land in columbaria at Cape Collinson, Kwai Chung and Wo Hop Shek for commissioning in the first half of 2006 by phases, with an addition of another 1,000 niches in Cheung Chau Columbarium by end-2006. Besides, the Board of Management of Chinese Permanent Cemeteries is developing 25,000 additional niches in its Cape Collinson Chinese Permanent Cemetery. The niches are expected to be completed by phases in 2006 and 2007.

JUSTIFICATIONS FOR THE PROJECT

5. To meet the increasing public demand for niches in the longer term, the Government is working on a robust plan that aims to provide new columbarium blocks in existing cemetery/columbarium sites at Diamond Hill, Kwai Chung and Fu Shan Columbaria as well as Wo Hop Shek Cemetery within the next decade.

6. One of our proposals is to construct a multi-storey columbarium block at Po Kong Village Road in Wong Tai Sin, adjacent to the existing columbarium blocks and next to the Diamond Hill Crematorium and the Diamond Hill Urn Cemetery. The new columbarium block, occupying an area of about 2,800 square metres (m²), is located within a site annotated for use as “Cemetery” and is easily accessible by public transport.

PROJECT SCOPE

7. The scope of the project comprises the construction of an eight-storey columbarium block with a construction floor area (CFA) of 7,660 m². The proposed columbarium will provide the following facilities -

- (a) construction of about 18,500 niches;
- (b) provision of supporting facilities including joss paper burner and joss paper pans, ash collection chamber, exhaust treatment plant and ash and refuse chutes on each floor;
- (c) provision of ancillary facilities such as office, storeroom, public toilets, plant rooms, benches, refuse storage area;
- (d) provision of two passenger lifts;
- (e) installation of public address (PA) system and closed circuit television (CCTV) system; and
- (f) construction of a landscaped sitting out area.

———— A site plan is at **Enclosure 1**, a typical upper floor plan is at **Enclosure 2**,
 ————— and the artist's impression of the proposed columbarium is at
 ————— **Enclosure 3**. The total capital cost of the project is about \$112 million.

8. In designing the additional columbarium block at Diamond Hill, we have envisaged the problem of a large number of visitors during the Ching Ming and Chung Yeung Festivals. In order to allow thoroughfare to help facilitate crowd movements during these festivals, we have therefore purposely adopted an open space design at the ground floor whereby only toilet facilities and plant rooms will be provided without niches (please refer to Enclosure 1). A number of exits to Po Kong Village Road will also be provided for easy accessibility and better crowd circulation. The layout of the proposed columbarium has adopted the design of a landscaped garden which would harmonize with the surrounding environment.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

9. The original scope of the project was to build 20,000 niches at the site to meet increasing public demand. When we consulted the former Wong Tai Sin District Board in November 1995, Members expressed concern on the crowd control and traffic arrangements during

the Ching Ming and Chung Yeung Festivals, adequacy of fire prevention measures and circulation area within the Columbarium, potential air pollution caused by the joss paper burners, and the need for adequate barrier at boundary to conceal the building from outside.

10. To address these concerns, changes were made to the proposed project when it was re-submitted to the former Wong Tai Sin Provisional District Board (WTSPDB) in July 1997. For the design of the new block, it mainly included reduction in the number of niches from 20,000 to 18,500, widening the width of the passageway on each floor to improve crowd circulation, and installation of exhaust air treatment plants such as a self-cleansing cabinet dust collector coupled with electrostatic or chemical filter. In addition, independent ash chutes will be provided on each floor to prevent ash from emitting from the burner. Members noted the revised proposal.

TRAFFIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND CROWD CONTROL

11. To address the concerns of the WTSPDB on traffic arrangements, the Government undertook to conduct a Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) study to explore the need for building a footbridge linking the first floor of the new block to the other side of Po Kong Village Road so as to divert pedestrian crossing without affecting traffic flow. The TIA report recommended that as the high pedestrian volume would only occur during Ching Ming and Chung Yeung festivals, it would not be necessary to build a footbridge across Po Kong Village Road. Instead, the TIA report made a number of recommendations, including temporary traffic management arrangements to handle the increase in traffic on Po Kong Village Road during special festivals, and temporary crossings managed by Police to facilitate pedestrians walking across Po Kong Village Road.

12. In March 2005, we consulted the Traffic and Transport Committee of the Wong Tai Sin District Council on the findings of the TIA. The Committee agreed with the findings of the TIA that it would not be necessary to build a footbridge. We made a progress report to the Committee in November 2005 on the Government's successful

experience in implementing a trial scheme on enhanced traffic and crowd control measures, including the implementation of one-way directional flow inside the columbarium and cemetery areas, during the Chung Yeung Festival. As the grave sweepers would not need to pass through the existing cemetery area to get access to the proposed new columbarium block, it is anticipated that the increase of grave sweepers will not create additional burden to the access roads inside the existing cemetery area, and the internal crowd circulation inside the new columbarium block is expected to match well with the enhanced traffic and crowd control measures. The Committee noted our progress report and was content with the revised design of the proposed columbarium block that would allow plenty of open space on the ground floor for the public and crowd control. The Committee had no objection to the proposed columbarium block.

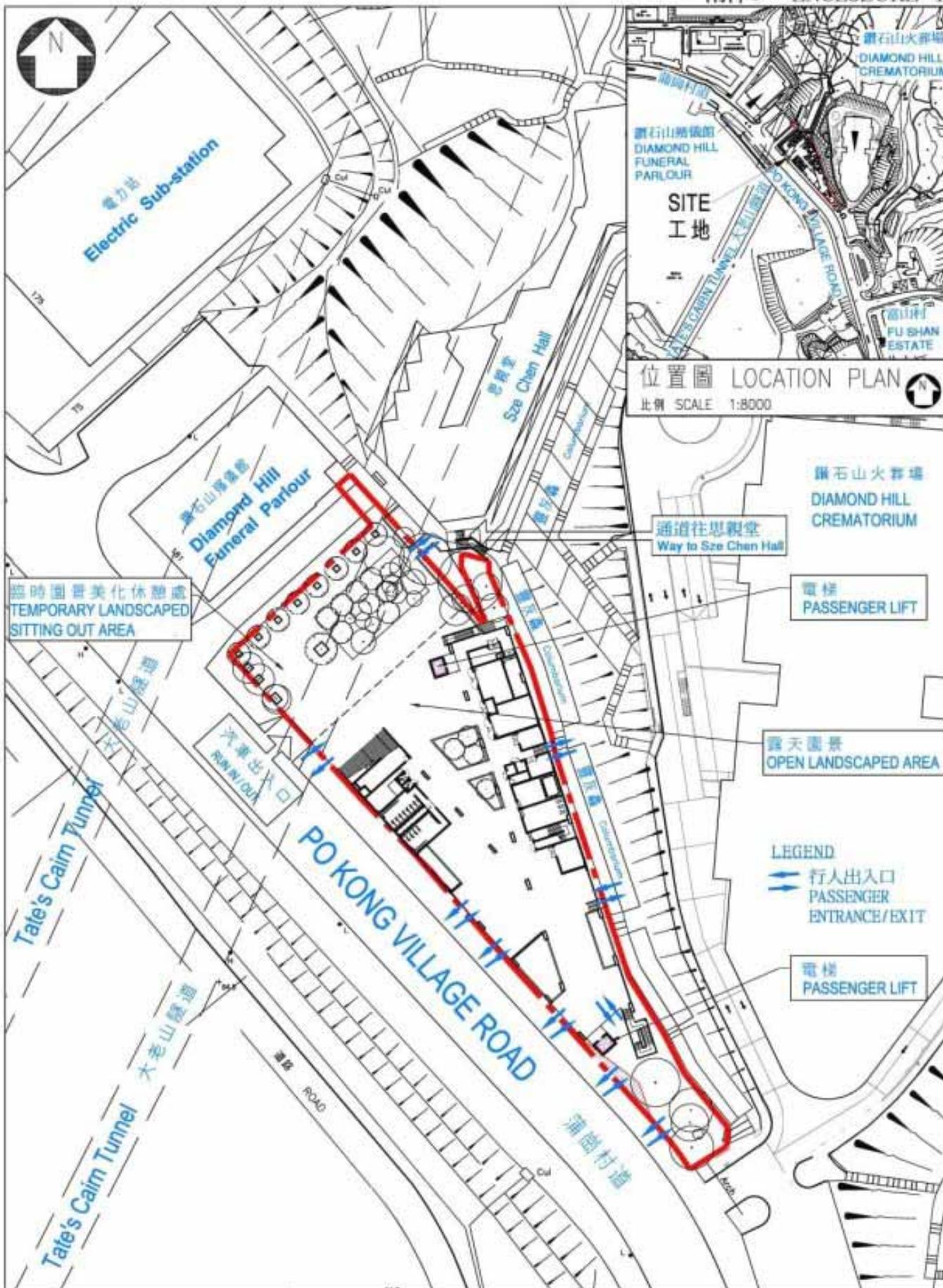
IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMME

13. We plan to make a submission to the Public Works Subcommittee (PWSC) to upgrade the proposed project to Category A of the Public Works Programme in February 2006 and to seek funding approval from the Finance Committee in around April 2006. Construction works are expected to commence in July 2006 for completion by December 2008.

ADVICE SOUGHT

14. Members are invited to comment on the proposed project. Subject to Members' views, we plan to submit the proposal to the PWSC for consideration in February 2006.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
January 2006



003NB 鑽石山增建靈灰安置所 ADDITIONAL COLUMBARIUM AT DIAMOND HILL	drawn by BILLY CHOW	date JAN,06	drawing no. AB/4441/XB001	scale 1:1250
	approved Y. C. WU	date JAN,06		
	office ARCHITECTURAL BRANCH			



臨時園景美化休憩處
TEMPORARY LANDSCAPED
SITTING OUT AREA



露天園景
OPEN
LANDSCAPED
AREA

靈灰位設於
一至四樓
NICHES ON
1/F - 4/F

電梯
PASSENGER LIFT

靈灰位設於
一至七樓
NICHES ON
1/F - 7/F

化寶爐
JOSS PAPER
BURNER

主樓梯
GRAND
STAIRCASE

電梯
PASSENGER LIFT

FIFTH FLOOR PLAN

7.5m 0 15m

003NB 鑽石山增建靈灰安置所 ADDITIONAL COLUMBARIUM AT DIAMOND HILL	drawn by BILLY CHOW	date JAN,06	drawing no. AB/4441/XB102	scale 1:750
	approved Y. C. WU	date JAN,06	 ARCHITECTURAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT	
	office ARCHITECTURAL BRANCH			



從南面望向增建靈灰安置所的構思圖

VIEW OF THE ADDITIONAL COLUMBARIUM FROM SOUTH DIRECTION (ARTIST'S IMPRESSION)

003NB 鑽石山增建靈灰安置所 ADDITIONAL COLUMBARIUM AT DIAMOND HILL	drawn by BILLY CHOW	date JAN, 06	drawing no. AB/4441/XB103	scale N.T.S.
	approved Y. C. WU	date JAN, 06	 ARCHITECTURAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT	
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