

**Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs
Subcommittee on Heritage Conservation**

Nga Tsin Wai Village Project

The Subcommittee on Heritage Conservation discussed the Urban Renewal Authority (URA)'s Nga Tsin Wai Village (K1) project on 18 July 2007. This paper sets out the following information on the K1 project as requested by Members -

- (a) the conservation plan of the Nga Tsin Wai Village project;
- (b) the report on the history of the Nga Tsin Wai Village; and
- (c) the result of seeking the major land owner's consent for excavation work to be carried out to find out whether any historical relics exist underground in the village.

2. The URA has set out its conservation plan for the K1 project at **Annex A**.

3. On items (b) and (c) of paragraph 1 above, the Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO)'s report on the historical background of the Nga Tsin Wai Village is at **Annex B**. The AMO has also written to the major land owner of the Nga Tsin Wai Village, requesting permission for carrying out an archaeological survey within the village. Subsequently, a meeting was held between the major owner and the AMO on 16 August 2007. At the meeting, the major owner's representatives declined AMO's request for conducting an archaeological survey at the lots under their ownership for the time being. The major owner's representatives opined that the proposed survey could be conducted at a later stage after demolition of all existing structures and removal of residents.

4. Both the Administration and URA have noted Members' wish expressed at the said meeting that to relieve villagers from the poor living conditions in the village, early compensation should be offered. We are giving serious consideration to this matter and will report progress in due course.

Development Bureau
September 2007

Urban Renewal Authority Project K1 Nga Tsin Wai Village

The purpose of this paper is to update Members about the position with respect to Urban Renewal Authority (URA) Project K1 Nga Tsin Wai Village (the Project) following our last report to the Subcommittee on 18 July 2007.

Background

2. The Project is one of the 25 projects announced by the former Land Development Corporation (LDC) in 1998 and inherited by the URA along with the obligation to give priority to their implementation. Project K1 is planned for implementation in 2007/08.

3. Nga Tsin Wai Village is the only remaining walled village in the urban area, but two-thirds of the village houses have already been demolished (**Plan 1**). The remaining structures are very dilapidated and decrepit and the living conditions are very poor due to the lack of proper sanitation facilities and the uncontrolled proliferation of illegal structures.

4. The Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB) had discussed this Project in December 1994 and raised no objection to the redevelopment at that time. They re-confirmed their decision subsequently in 1999 and 2000.

5. In November 2005, the Wong Tai Sin District Council (WTSDC) requested the URA to expedite the redevelopment of the village and also to preserve the three conservation elements, namely the gatehouse, the embedded stone tablet “Hing Yau Yu” (慶有餘) and the

Tin Hau Temple. The AAB was subsequently informed of this arrangement in March 2006 and raised no objection to it.

6. Nearly 70% of the property interests within the village are now owned by a major land owner. The major land owner already has in hand various approved building plans to develop its own lots for residential uses and it has obtained vacant possession of most of its lots.

Conservation Strategy

7. Although the village fabrics have long gone, it is our intention to endeavour to preserve the remaining historic relics and re-create the village ambience as far as possible. URA has, therefore, decided that the design of the Project should be “Conservation Paramount”.

8. In response to community concerns on conservation, URA engaged a conservation consultant team, led by the internationally renowned Malaysian conservation expert and member of UNESCO’s conservation expert panel, Mr. Laurence Loh, to develop the conservation strategy and implementation outline in early 2006.

9. The concept of “Conservation by Design” was proposed in the Conservation Plan as a mediated solution to balance the old and the new. Based on the recommendations of the conservation consultants, it is proposed that, in addition to preserving the agreed three conservation elements, the Central Axis (中軸線), the lane pattern as well as eight village houses, which are situated along the Central Axis and have been identified as having intact historical architectural elements, will also be conserved subject to their structural conditions (**Plan 2**).

10. URA proposes to develop a conservation park centred around and spreading out from the Central Axis and featuring the historical

elements mentioned above as well as other excavated underground relics. The ambience of this original walled village will be re-created through special hard and soft landscape design concepts to celebrate the culture and history of the village (**Plans 3 and 4**).

11. The conservation proposal for the Project aims to:-
 - a) Preserve historic relics and re-create the village ambience;
 - b) Retain the original village layout;
 - c) Preserve the Tin Hau Temple, the gatehouse, the “Hing Yau Yu” stone tablet, the Central Axis and the lane pattern, and the old houses along the Central Axis;
 - d) Retain existing trees as far as practically possible and create green buffer zones through vertical greening; and
 - e) Preserve underground relics excavated, if found.

Latest Layout Design

12. To take forward the recommendations of the Conservation Plan and translate the “Conservation by Design” concept into the overall building and landscape design, an architecture and landscape design consultant team led by Professor Bernard V. Lim, professor of the Department of Architecture of the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the principal of Architectural Design and Research Group, was engaged to prepare the conceptual design in February 2007.

13. In order to provide a conservation park centred around the Central Axis of the walled village, it is proposed that the residential towers should be positioned along the northern and southern boundaries. They would be about 40 metres apart, leaving generous space for the open conservation park. The towers on each side will also be separated to allow a secondary axis perpendicular to the Central Axis to improve air

ventilation and provide better visual relief (**Plan 5**).

14. In compliance with the latest building height restrictions of 100mPD and 120mPD, which have been recommended by the Planning Department (PlanD) to protect the visual corridor towards Lion Rock from Kai Tak, the residential towers will step down from 28 to 20 storeys from west to east to provide a varied skyline as well as orientation towards the entrance of the village and the Kai Tak Nullah to the east. The building heights of the residential towers are considered to be compatible with the adjacent residential towers of Tung Tau (II) Estate, which includes the 26-storey Yiu Tung House and the 27-storey Choi Tung House. Sky gardens and vertical greening will be provided in the towers to enhance the environment at high levels. The four residential lift lobbies will be in close proximity to the four corners of the previous village wall, thereby providing a new interpretation of the historical context and layout.

15. To minimize the impact on the conservation park, the main bulk of the residential towers will be lifted up to provide a vertical clearance of some 15 metres from the ground level except for structures such as the lift and utility cores which will carry the loads of the towers to the ground. This vertical clearance will enhance the local air ventilation at pedestrian level as well as providing visual relief across the village at low level (**Plan 6**). Only about 0.2 to 0.5 of the permitted 1.5 non-domestic plot ratio will be utilized in the Project. All of this will be at ground level in the form of adaptive re-use of the village houses and compatible small new buildings which not only respect the original village pattern, but also minimize the impact on the future conservation park.

16. We have been in discussion with the major land owner about

the co-operation arrangement for development of this Project as well as about the latest layout design concept.

Recent Public Consultation

17. The proposed conservation strategy was presented to the Nga Tsin Wai village representatives and local villagers on 14 September 2007. They generally welcomed the conservation strategy and reiterated their request to expedite the commencement of the Project in order to relieve them from their poor living conditions.

18. The WTSDC was also briefed about the proposed conservation strategy and the latest position with respect to the Project on 27 September 2007.

Way Forward

19. URA believes that the current conservation paramount development concept is the best achievable compromise, taking into account the community's aspirations with respect to the conservation elements in the Project as well as various design constraints.

20. It is URA's intention to finalize the conservation strategy and layout design as soon as possible, taking into account the views of various stakeholders, in particular the villagers, the WTSDC and the major land owner. Meanwhile, URA will continue to maintain close contact with the residents affected and to ensure that appropriate assistance is given to those in need.

Urban Renewal Authority

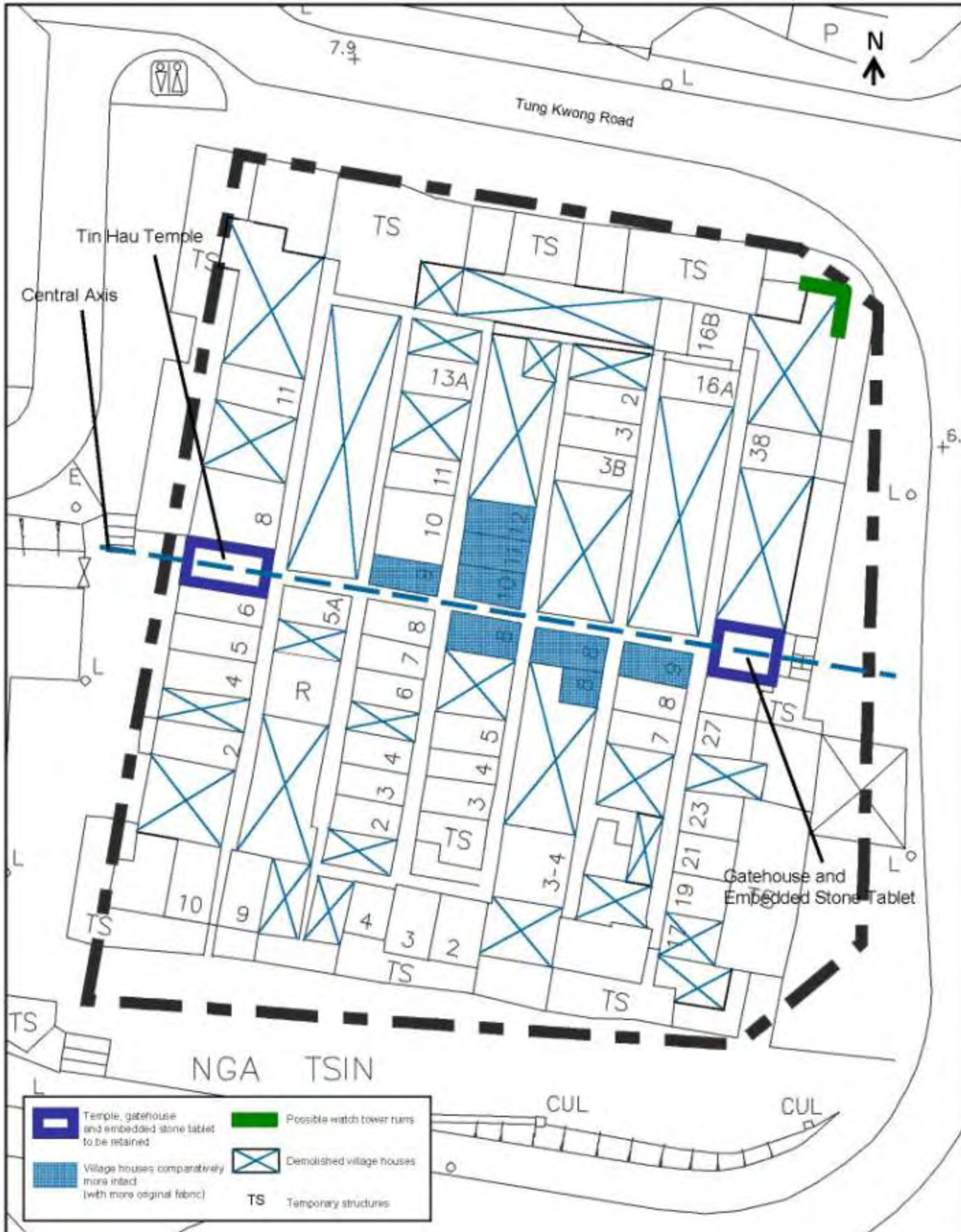
September 2007



 Project Boundary

Location Plan and Site Photo

URA Project K1 Nga Tsin Wai Village



Preliminary Survey Results
 URA Project K1 Nga Tsin Wai Village



View from Kai Tak Nullah



Forecourt of Tin Hau Temple



View from Kai Tak Nullah

Artist Impression of Conservation Park

URA Project K1 Nga Tsin Wai Village



Secondary Axis

Central Axis



Schematic Layout for Residential Towers

URA Project K1 Nga Tsin Wai Village



Plan 5



Local Examples of Vertical Clearance



Airport Railway Hong Kong Station



HSBC Headquarter Lobby



Hong Kong International Airport Lobby



KCR East Rail Hung Hom Station Lobby

History of the Nga Tsin Wai Village (衙前圍村)

Nga Tsin Wai village, also known as “Hing Yau Yu Tsuen” (慶有餘村), was probably established by the Ng, Chan and Lee Clans in the mid 14th century.

2. During the reign of Kangxi (康熙), the Qing government strictly enforced the Imperial Evacuation Order from around 1662 to 1669. The coastal inhabitants were forced to migrate inland. To comply with the Order and due to the frequent disturbances by pirates, the villagers had to abandon their villages.¹ In the 18th century, after the rescinding of the Order, the Ng Clan together with the Chan and Lee Clans migrated back to the area and redeveloped “Nga Tsin Wai” village at the present site.² The village walls, watchtowers, drawbridge as well as the moat were built there to protect the village against pirate attacks.

3. At that time, Nga Tsin Wai formed an inter-village union called the “Kowloon League of Seven” with the nearby villages named Sha Po, Ta Kwu Leng, Shek Kwu Lung, Kak Hang, Tai Hom, Nga Tsin Long, Ma Tau Chung and Ma Tau Wai, etc., to guard against any attacks and disturbances from the pirates and bandits.³ Nga Tsin Wai had been the head village of the League. However, all the League’s member villages except Nga Tsin Wai had been cleared.⁴

4. The construction of Nga Tsin Wai village follows the traditional Chinese walled village layout. It was square shaped with watchtowers at the four corners and an entrance facing the east. The open area was located in front of the village entrance and the village was bordered by a moat spanned by a drawbridge.⁵ The temple is situated at the rear end of the central axis while the gatehouse is situated in the middle of the front row of the village houses facing Tung Kwong Road. The gatehouse is used as the main entrance. Seven rows of houses are separated by six narrow alleys.

¹ 蕭國健〈九龍城衙前圍村〉，香港：九龍城衙前圍鄉委會，2001年。

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

5. At present, about 60% of the village houses within Nga Tsin Wai had been demolished and the remaining houses had undergone various alterations at different periods and are in dilapidated condition. In addition, the village walls, the watchtowers at four corners as well as the drawbridge had been demolished and the moat had been filled up. Only the layout of the village is retained. There are only three items of historical interest within the village still in existence, including the Tin Hau Temple (originally built in the 18th Century)⁶, the gatehouse as well as the stone tablet with the inscription of “慶有餘” embedded over the gatehouse.

6. As regards the Tin Hau Temple, it was not in the original state as it had undergone repairs in 1763, 1937, 1948, 1976 and 1985.⁷

7. At present, traditional Chinese festivals including the *Taiping Qingjiao* and Tin Hau Festival are still celebrated by the villagers of Nga Tsin Wai.⁸ In the past, each village of the “Kowloon League of Seven” co-organized *Taiping Qingjiao* once in every ten years.⁹ The first *Taiping Qingjiao* was conducted in 1726.¹⁰ The latest *Taiping Qingjiao* was held in 2006 by villagers of Nga Tsin Wai. Besides, villagers also worship their common patron goddess Tin Hau enshrined at the Tin Hau Temple.

Antiquities and Monuments Office
Leisure and Cultural Services Department
September 2007

Reference

1. 蕭國健，〈九龍城衙前圍村〉，香港：九龍城衙前圍鄉委會，2001年。
2. 游子安（編），《黃大仙風物志》，香港：黃大仙區議會，2003年。
3. 趙雨樂、鍾寶賢（編），《香港地區史研究之一：九龍城》，香港：三聯書店，2001年。
4. Hase, P.H., “Beside the Yamen: Nga Tsin Wai Village,” *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol.39, 2001, p. 1-82.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Information from Wong Tai Sin District Office.

⁹ 蕭國健〈九龍城衙前圍村〉，香港：九龍城衙前圍鄉委會，2001年。

¹⁰ 游子安（編）《黃大仙風物志》，香港：黃大仙區議會，2003年，頁127。