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Panel on Development

Meeting on 26 October 2010

**Background brief on Conserving Central -- redevelopment scheme
of West Wing, Central Government Offices**

Purpose

This paper provides background information on the Administration's redevelopment scheme of West Wing, Central Government Offices under the "Conserving Central" initiative, and provides a summary of members' concerns and views on relevant issues.

The "Conserving Central" initiative

2. The Administration briefed the Panel on, inter alia, the "Conserving Central" heritage conservation initiative on 27 April 2010. The Chief Executive announced "Conserving Central" in his 2009-2010 Policy Address, which aims at preserving social, historical and architectural features in Central while adding new life and vibrancy to the area. The eight initiatives under "Conserving Central" include --

- (a) New Central Harbourfront -- The Administration will develop Sites 1 and 2 into a distinctive civic node and mixed use precinct featuring low-rise structures for exhibition, retail, entertainment, civic and community uses, under public-private partnership for public enjoyment;
- (b) Central Market -- The Urban Renewal Authority plans to revitalize it into a Central Oasis to provide some much needed space and greenery amidst the hustle and bustle of Central and a trendy hang-out for the working population in Central;
- (c) Former Police Married Quarters -- The site has been planned for the promotion of creative industries with facilities such as

exhibition galleries, studios, and office or shop space for various creative industry-related industries. It will also include an exhibition centre of Central School and a display of the historical relics;

- (d) Central Police Station Compound -- The Hong Kong Jockey Club is going to transform it into a hub of heritage, arts, culture and tourism for the enjoyment of the public. Facilities such as art galleries and a theatre will be provided to promote contemporary visual and performing arts in Hong Kong;
- (e) Central Government Offices Complex -- After relocation of the Central Government Offices to Tamar, the Main Wing and East Wing will be preserved for appropriate adaptive re-use. The West Wing, which is of low historical significance and architectural merit, will be demolished to make way for commercial development. Part of its present footprint will be developed as a garden to preserve the existing greenery;
- (f) Murray Building -- The building has high potential to be converted into a hotel. With appropriate conversion and associated supporting facilities, the new hotel will be popular for visitors;
- (g) Former French Mission Building -- The Administration is awaiting ideas on the most suitable adaptive re-use of this building and it intends to adopt an open process to take the project forward; and
- (h) Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui Compound -- The Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui proposes to redevelop the Compound and preserve four historic buildings. A new Community Complex will be built to provide extended non-profit making community services.

3. The Panel further discussed "Conserving Central" on 25 May 2010, and the concerns and views expressed by members are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

Designation of a historic town district

4. To achieve a holistic conservation of the district rather than piecemeal conservation of historic buildings/sites, a member suggested that the Administration should consider designating Central and Sheung Wan as a historic town district. As some of the proposed conservation projects would likely attract high pedestrian flow, the Administration should conduct in-depth assessment on their traffic, environmental and social impacts. Hon KAM Nai-wai moved a motion at the Panel meeting on 25 May 2010 urging the Administration to consider planning and developing Central and Sheung Wan

as a historic town district and conducting a comprehensive assessment on the transport, environmental and social impacts in conserving Central. The motion was however negated. Some members regarded Central and Sheung Wan as important business centres with potential for further development. They considered it inappropriate to go to the extent of developing the district as a historic town for fear that this would restrict its development. Other members believed that a study on designating Central and Sheung Wan into historic town district would be useful in that it would help figure out what restrictions, such as development density, should be imposed on different areas to maintain a balance between development and heritage conservation.

5. The Administration advised that designating the whole of Central as a historic town required consideration of fundamental planning principles, and the Administration at present had no plan to adopt a historic town district concept in the planning and implementation of the "Conserving Central" initiative. Nevertheless, detailed impact assessment would be carried out when details of the projects were available. In particular, the Administration would examine how connectivity and accessibility within Central could be improved.

Scope of the "Conserving Central" initiative

6. Some members were concerned that "Conserving Central" had failed to include some conservation initiatives within the district such as the two urban renewal projects in Wing Lee Street and Graham Street. For the former, the Administration should also consider conserving other sites nearby such as the side streets connecting the area.

7. The Administration advised that the eight projects represented the beginning, not the end, of the Administration's conservation efforts in Central, the success of which would depend on the participation of other private or public organizations. The Administration would seek to collaborate with private and public organisations in initiating different conservation projects within the district. The Administration was ready to initiate necessary town planning procedures to facilitate heritage conservation efforts by the private sector. As for Wing Lee Street, its conservation would cover not just the buildings, but also the neighbourhood including the access and the adjacent open market.

Raising public awareness

8. Members also made other suggestions on enhancing conservation efforts, such as displaying photographs and information of historic buildings and historical events at heritage sites or other appropriate locations, providing connectivity among historic sites and buildings in Central to improve pedestrian access and setting up a museum in the revitalized Central Market to underline the historical significance of Central in Hong Kong's development. They hoped

that these efforts would help raise public awareness of heritage conservation and revitalization.

9. The Administration advised that signs had been put up along the Dr Sun Yat-sen Historical Trail, as well as along the heritage trails in Wan Chai. Display boards would also be provided on Pak Tsz Lane to explain the significant historic events that had taken place there. The Administration would consider providing information boards at more historic sites after the completion of various revitalization projects. It would continue to promote community efforts through the on-going activities of the Commissioner of Heritage's Office.

Latest development

10. The Administration announced on 17 September 2010 the plan for redeveloping the West Wing of the Central Government Offices. The Administration intends to consult the Panel on 26 October 2010 on the proposed redevelopment scheme. The scheme proposes to develop two-thirds of the West Wing site in the eastern portion into a public open space, and the remaining one-third at the western end into a Grade A office/commercial building.

Relevant papers

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

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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>