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31 December 2010

Mr. Stephen Lam  
Clerk to Panel  
Panel on Development  
Legislative Council  
8 Jackson Road  
Central  
Hong Kong

Dear Mr. Lam,

### **Panel on Development**

#### **The Old Stone Wall of St. Andrew's Church Compound**

Thank you for your letter dated 3 November 2010 to the Secretary for Development on a public submission to the Panel on Development on the captioned subject.

#### **Grading of the historic buildings in the St. Andrew's Church compound**

The St. Andrew's Church compound<sup>1</sup>, located at 138 Nathan Road, Kowloon and currently accorded a Grade 2 status, comprises four historic buildings, namely St. Andrew's Church building (completed in 1906), the Vicarage (completed around 1909), the Amah's Quarters (completed around 1910) and the Caretaker's Quarters (completed around 1910). In the assessment exercise for the gradings of

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<sup>1</sup> The Anglican Christian Centre is a recent addition in 1978 and is not a historic building.

1 444 historic buildings identified in a territory-wide survey, the above-mentioned cluster of historic buildings was proposed to be given a Grade 1 status. This exercise involves assessment carried out by an independent expert panel of the heritage value and the proposed gradings<sup>2</sup> of the identified historic buildings, public consultation conducted by an independent statutory board, the Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB), on the proposed gradings in 2009, and subsequent confirmation of the finalized gradings by the AAB.

The AAB, supported by the expert group, is now in the process of finalizing the gradings of the 1 444 historic buildings, including the grading for the cluster of historic buildings in the St. Andrew's Church compound. The expert panel and the AAB will take into account the views received from the landowners and the public, such as those on the rubble wall at the St. Andrew's Church, in coming to a decision. Monument declaration is a matter for the Antiquities Authority, after consultation with the AAB and with the approval of the Chief Executive, under the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (Cap. 53). The Antiquities Authority will consider a place, building, site or structure for declaration as a monument if its heritage significance has reached the high threshold required and having regard to other relevant factors. The same approach will be observed in considering the merits for monument declaration for the St. Andrew's Church compound.

### **Proposed construction of an underground auditorium and conservation considerations**

In 1994, St. Andrew's Church (the Church) proposed to demolish all

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<sup>2</sup> Historic buildings are graded (viz. Grade 1, Grade 2 or Grade 3) based on six assessment criteria: historic interest, architectural merit, group value, social value and local interest, authenticity and rarity. The grading system is an administrative arrangement to provide an objective basis for determining the heritage value and the preservation need of a historic building as follows –

- Grade 1 status refers to buildings of outstanding merit, which every effort should be made to preserve if possible.
- Grade 2 status refers to buildings of special merit; efforts should be made to selectively preserve.
- Grade 3 status refers to buildings of some merit; preservation in some form would be desirable and alternative means could be considered if preservation is not practicable.

Buildings that do not meet the threshold for grading are ungraded.

buildings within the site for the redevelopment of a 25-storey building for a combination of uses, including religious use, office accommodation and staff quarters, to enhance its services. Having regard to the views of the AAB and the Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO), the Church formulated a revised proposal in 1996 which involved –

- (a) the in-situ preservation of the main church building and the porch; and
- (b) the demolition of the Old Vicarage and the Caretaker's Quarters to make way for the construction of a 12-storey building for providing educational facilities.

When consulted on the Church's revised proposal on 6 May 1997, the AAB indicated no objection in principle, but strongly recommended the preservation of the Old Vicarage and the Caretaker's Quarters.

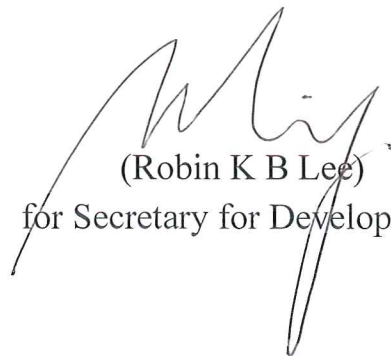
Taking account of the views received from the AAB, the Church further revised its redevelopment plan and proposed instead in June 2009 the construction of an underground auditorium at the existing slope and landscaped area abutting Nathan Road. The proposed redevelopment plan falls within the scope of permitted use under the land lease for the site. Under this revised proposal, all four historic buildings within the site boundary of the Church will be preserved while additional underground space will be made available to meet the functional needs of the Church. In this revised design, the rubble wall along Nathan Road was proposed to be removed to make way for the entrance of the new underground auditorium. The Church intended to salvage the rubbles of the existing wall for re-use in the site as decorative features. During the consultation with the AAB on the Church's revised proposal on 9 September 2009, some AAB members expressed support for the proposal as the proposed underground structure would preserve the historic buildings on the site intact while some other members considered that the existing rubble wall along Nathan Road should be retained.

CHO and AMO subsequently conveyed the views of the AAB members to the Church, and continued to explore possible preservation options with the Church while noting the Church's aspirations for enhanced service provision. Following

these discussions, the Church agreed to further revise the proposed design of the underground auditorium whereby some stones from the existing rubble wall will be used to adorn part of the central portion of the new wall facing Nathan Road. This revised design preserves all four historic buildings on the site and seeks to keep the impact on the existing layout of the site to the minimum. When the AAB was consulted on the revised design on 31 August 2010, some AAB members expressed reservations and were in favour of retaining the existing rubble retaining wall as far as practicable. As advised by the AAB, AMO has conveyed the views of AAB members to the Church for its consideration.

The current proposed project design represents the continued effort of the Church to adjust its proposal, following several rounds of discussion with CHO and AMO, to strike a balance between development and preservation needs. We have relayed the recent public submission to the Panel about the rubble wall to the Church. In addition, we will consolidate the views received from the public and related information for consideration by the AAB. The considered advice of the AAB on the grading of the buildings and structures within the Church compound will form an objective basis for the continued discussion of CHO and AMO with the Church on the preservation of features of heritage significant on the site. In our future discussion with the Church, we will continue to encourage them to formulate a practicable proposal that would best address the preservation need of the heritage buildings/structures at this location while satisfying the Church's aspirations for enhanced service provision.

Yours sincerely,



(Robin K B Lee)  
for Secretary for Development