

**For Discussion
on 29 November 2005**

**BOARD PAPER
AAB/41/2005-06**

**MEMORANDUM FOR MEMBERS OF THE
ANTIQUITIES ADVISORY BOARD**

**PRESENTATION BY URBAN RENEWAL AUTHORITY ON
WAN CHAI MASTER THINKING**

PURPOSE

To seek Members' views on the "Wan Chai Master Thinking" presented by the Urban Renewal Authority (URA).

BACKGROUND

2. The Wan Chai Master Thinking is currently under preparation by the URA, which aims at a holistic approach to the future regeneration of the Wan Chai district. The study area covered broadly extends from Kennedy Road in the south, towards the harbour to the north, and from Pacific Place Phase 3 in the west, to approaching Causeway Bay in the east. Conservation of valuable historic buildings is included among other proposals for pedestrianisation, street improvements, traffic calming, and greening. Details on the Wan Chai Master Thinking are at Annex for Members' reference.

ADVICE SOUGHT

3. The Antiquities and Monuments Office is in principle supportive towards the overall concept of the Wan Chai Master Thinking subject to detailed consideration of individual projects, and will keep close liaison with the URA and other relevant Government departments on its implementation.

4. With the information provided in paragraphs 2 to 3 above, Members are invited to comment on the Wan Chai Master Thinking prepared by the URA.

PRESENTATION

5. Representatives of the URA will give a presentation at the Antiquities Advisory Board meeting on 29 November 2005.

Antiquities and Monuments Office
Leisure and Cultural Services Department
November 2005

Ref.: LCS AM 22/3
LCS AM 41/2/5

Presentation by URA on Wan Chai Master Thinking

1. Purpose

To seek members' advice on the Wanchai Master Thinking.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The URA's Master Thinking for Wan Chai is prepared with a view to provide a framework of visions and proposals to solicit views and comments from our partners, stakeholders and the community to formulate a plan which could be implemented with joint efforts. Given the commitment of URA in Wan Chai to redevelop, rehabilitate, preserve and revitalize, with planned and implementing projects, the Master Thinking exercise would identify new opportunities and ideas and review the district comprehensively for a more concerted approach for the regeneration of Wan Chai in general.
- 2.2 The district of Wan Chai, and in particular its older parts in the vicinity of Johnston Road and Queen's Road East is a diverse and vibrant urban quarter of notable character and heritage. At the same time old Wan Chai suffers from typical urban problems such as dilapidation, congestion and pollution as well as a shortage of open space and greening. The URA (and its predecessor the LDC) has responded to these problems by launching a series of redevelopment and revitalisation projects including at Wan Chai Road/Tai Yuen Street (H9), Johnston Road (H16), Lee Tung Street/McGregor Street (H15), Queen's Road East (H17) and Mallory Street/Burrows Street. Buildings in Wan Chai have also benefited from the URA's rehabilitation initiatives.
- 2.3 These development projects are site specific, however the URA realises that the impact and benefits of such a concentration of projects will fall beyond the project boundaries themselves. As a major stakeholder in the development of Wan Chai, the URA has developed the Master Thinking for Wan Chai which steps outside of the strict confines of the project sites and embraces the streets and spaces in the vicinity of these projects. In line with the URA's '4R' strategy, the Master Thinking takes a holistic approach to the future regeneration of the area. The Master Thinking affords a purpose and coherence to the URA's projects and develops proposals which will optimise their potential and benefits for the Wan Chai community in general.

3. Vision and Proposals in the Wan Chai Master Thinking

- 3.1 The study area covered broadly extends from Kennedy Road in the south, towards the harbour to the north, and from Pacific Place Phase 3 in the west, to approaching Causeway Bay in the east. It covers the area which defines the distinctive character of Wan Chai which is clearly different for example from the retail hubs of Admiralty and Causeway Bay. Within this area, the Master Thinking focuses on the 'core' of old Wan Chai where active and

potential URA actions are concentrated but also emphasises the importance of connections and activity spines to adjoining districts.

- 3.2 The Master Thinking has evolved from a process including engagement of the local community as a strategic study. Out of this process, a vision for Wan Chai has been proposed by the URA:

Vision Statement: People, Quality Vibrancy: A place where business and community, old and new, large and small mix together to generate a district rich in character and distinct in Hong Kong.

- 3.3 The essential elements of the Wan Chai vision are:

- *Engaging the community of interests:* Active engagement of the Wan Chai community to achieve workable solutions through information and appreciation of others' views.
- *Celebrating neighborhood character:* Recognising Wan Chai's vibrant street life and markets, meeting places, buildings and places of cultural and historic interest and how new development can enhance this character.
- *Wan Chai's dynamic mixed use and scale:* Recognising Wan Chai's varied urban densities which retain and nurture narrow streets, small scale buildings and spaces for different uses and activities.
- *Retaining a diverse business environment:* Building on service sector activities and creating a place of choice for cultural and creative industries whilst retaining the existing flourishing businesses of Wan Chai.
- *Improving the housing stock:* More and varied housing meeting different needs and demands to achieve a more balanced neighbourhood.
- *Enhancing the retail and service offer:* Protecting existing specialist retail services such as furniture, tea houses, printing, toys and street markets through improvements to the quality of the street e.g. street paving, street furniture, access, lighting, signage and cleaning.
- *Promoting cultural tourism:* Promoting old Wan Chai street life through heritage trails and public art.
- *Ensuring a high quality public realm and built environment and creating breathing spaces:* New connections and enlivened and greener streets and spaces for people.
- *Delivering quality social and community services:* Improving the design of social and community facilities promoting and safe and comfortable living.

The Wan Chai vision and its components have formed an essential basis for the Master Thinking proposals.

- 3.4 The URA's Community Aspiration Survey of Wan Chai conducted in late 2004 by HKU showed that local people recognized the convenience, variety and heritage that characterise Wan Chai. Furthermore they support augmenting these characteristics together with improving the pedestrian environment and

providing more open space and greening.

4. Conservation and revitalization proposals in Wan Chai Master Thinking

- 4.1 The survey showed that there was a mixed concern regarding the conservation of historical buildings in Wan Chai. The URA would strive to conserve valuable historical buildings and convert them for adaptive re-use of beneficial purposes. In Wan Chai area alone, 14 number of buildings (ie. Grade II buildings at Nos. 186-190 Queen's Road East, No. 18 Ship Street and Nos. 1-11 Mallory Street and the pre-war buildings at Nos. 60-66 Johnston Road) are earmarked for conservation which represents a very significant effort of urban conservation. Other proposals in the Master Thinking include pedestrianisation, street improvements, traffic calming, greening of open space, streets, pedestrian linkages, podia and terraces as well as vertical greening. There are also trails and new uses and activities which support the vision for Wan Chai, in particular creating an environment and space to nurture cultural and creative industries. A pilot scheme to conserve a row of shophouses in Mallory Street for cultural and creative industry has commenced and is consulting both the public and stakeholders on the future user mix and mode of management.
- 4.2 In general, the conservation proposals aim at optimizing conservation opportunities including:
- Conserving valuable historical buildings within URA projects for suitable adaptive re-use.
 - Proposing heritage trails connecting the heritages.

5. Implementation

- 5.1 Whereas the Master Thinking has been prepared by the URA, the implementation of the various proposed actions will require the support and co-operation of other stakeholders in conjunction with the URA itself. Clearly the URA is responsible for the implementation of its redevelopment projects, however actions such as street, open space or pedestrian walkway improvements including greening will need to leverage on the experience, resources and skills of others. Joint efforts and resources from various stakeholders are essential for the implementation of the Master Thinking. By coordinating and prioritising these resources with the implementation of the URA projects, then the widest benefits from the overall Master Thinking can be achieved.
- 5.2 We have obtained broad support for the overall concept from the Housing, Planning and Lands Bureau, subject to discussion of the details with relevant Government Departments and agents. Both the Transport Department and Highways Department have also offered their general support to the Master Thinking and its holistic approach, subject to the assessment of individual and detailed proposals. Planning Department is now assisting in the circulation

of the concept for departmental comments.

- 5.3 The overall concept is the subject of public consultation (including the District Council and other stakeholders) and detailed implementation studies in the coming months. Certain of the URA's projects are already quite advanced, whereas those in the Master Thinking proposed for the public realm we believe may be implemented but are mainly conceptual at this stage. This is necessarily so as the preferred actions in Wan Chai will be something that the public will have the opportunity to consider and comment on and may therefore change as a result.
- 5.4 This presentation to Antiquities Advisory Board would seek preliminary comments and suggestions and in principle support for the Master Thinking, subject to detailed consideration of individual proposals.

URA
November 2005