

ANTIQUITIES ADVISORY BOARD

MINUTES OF THE OPEN SESSION OF THE 131st MEETING HELD ON
FRIDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2007 AT 2:35 P.M.
IN CONFERENCE ROOM, HERITAGE DISCOVERY CENTRE
KOWLOON PARK, HAIPHONG ROAD, TSIM SHA TSUI, KOWLOON

Present:

Mr Edward Ho, SBS, JP (Chairman)
The Hon Bernard Charnwut Chan, GBS, JP
Mrs Mariana Cheng Cho Chi-on, BBS, JP
Mr David Cheung Ching-leu
Mr Philip Kan Siu-lun
Mr Kwong Hoi-ying
Mr Billy Lam Chung-lun, SBS, JP
Mr Andrew Lam Siu-lo
Prof Lau Chi-pang
Mr Laurence Li Lu-jen
Prof Bernard Lim Wan-fung Dr Ng Cho-nam, BBS
Mr Almon Poon Chin-hung, JP
Dr Linda Tsui Yee-wan
Ir Dr Greg Wong Chak-yan, JP
Mr Bryan Wong Kim-yeung
Mr Yeung Yiu-chung, BBS, JP
Miss Vivian Yu Yuk-ying
Ms Lisa Yip Sau-wah, JP
Ms Heidi Kwok (Secretary)
Senior Executive Officer (Antiquities and Monuments)
Leisure and Cultural Services Department

Absent with Apologies:

Prof Leslie Chen Hung-chi
Mr Raymond Cheung Man-to
Ms Susanna Chiu Lai-kuen
Mr Patrick Fung Pak-tung, SC
Mr James Hong Shu-kin
The Hon Patrick Lau Sau-shing, SBS, JP
Mr Ng Yat-cheung, JP
Prof Simon Shen Xu-hui
Ms Miranda Szeto Siu-ching

In Attendance: Development Bureau

Miss Janet Wong, JP
Deputy Secretary (Works)¹

Leisure and Cultural Services Department

Mr Thomas Chow, JP
Director of Leisure and Cultural Services

Dr Louis Ng
Assistant Director (Heritage and Museums)

Ms Esa Leung
Executive Secretary (Antiquities and Monuments)

Ms Cissy Ho
Curator (Historical Buildings and Structures)

Mr Kevin Sun
Curator (Archaeology)

Mrs Ada Yau
Curator (Education and Publicity)

Mr Hessler Lee
Principal Marketing Coordinator (Heritage and Museums)

Miss Addy Wong
Senior Marketing Coordinator (Heritage and Museums)

Ms Yvonne Chan
Executive Officer I (Antiquities and Monuments)

Planning Department

Mr Anthony Kwan
Assistant Director/Metro

Architectural Services Department

Mr S L Lam
Senior Property Services Manager/Eastern and Antiquities

Opening Remarks

The Chairman started the meeting at 3:00 p.m. He thanked Members and representatives from departments and bureaux for attending the meeting. In view of the rather long agenda, he requested members to be concise in the discussion.

**Item 1 Matters Arising and Progress Report
(Board Paper AAB/32/2007-08)**

Presentation Session

2. Ms Esa Leung highlighted the following items in the Progress Report for Members' information:

- (a) Declaration of Tang Ancestral Hall and its ancillary buildings, Ha Tsuen, Yuen Long - Chief Executive's approval had been obtained and it was anticipated that declaration of the historic buildings as a monument would be gazetted in December 2007;
- (b) Former Police Married Quarters site at Hollywood Road - AMO had completed the archaeological investigation and report, which would be discussed under a separate agenda item;
- (c) Central Police Station Compound, Central - a presentation on its adaptive re-use would be made by the Hong Kong Jockey Club under a separate agenda item;
- (d) King Yin Lei, 45 Stubbs Road - AMO staff had conducted site inspections after the building had been declared as a proposed monument on 15 September 2007. Two experts from Guangzhou and Chinese University had started site survey and investigation work. An assessment report together with a restoration plan should be available in one to two months' time.
- (e) Jessville, 128 Pok Fu Lam Road - DEVB and AMO were closely liaising with the owner with a view to arriving at a development /conservation option acceptable to the parties concerned; and
- (f) Chik Kwai Study Hall, Pat Heung, Yuen Long - The study hall was gazetted as a declared monument in May 2007. The conservation study had been completed and an Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) permit was being applied for. It was anticipated that the restoration work would commence in two to three month's time.

3. Members noted the Progress Report.

**Item 2 Adaptive Re-use of the Central Police Station Compound: The Hong Kong Jockey Club Proposal
(Board Paper AAB/33/2007-08)**

4. The Chairman introduced the presentation team from the Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC):

- (a) Mr William Yiu, Executive Director, Charities - Presenter

- (b) Ms Bonny Wong, Head of Charities
- (c) Ms Catherine Choi, Manager, Public Affairs (Corporate Services)
- (d) Ms Amy Wong, Public Affairs Manager (Corporate Services)

Presentation Session

5. Mr William Yiu thanked the AAB for giving him the opportunity to introduce the HKJC's conservation and revitalization proposal for the Central Police Station (CPS) Compound. He said that planning for the proposed project started two and a half years ago. There had been a number of examples of successful conservation cases of similar nature overseas. The HKJC conducted a simple public opinion survey in mid-2006 involving a few hundred respondents. The findings revealed that the general public would like to see the CPS site developed into a cultural complex with food and beverage services, quality 'High Street' shops and a 'destination' for the family with historic/contemporary features - a Hong Kong icon. They also accepted the addition of new structures to the historic building cluster. On the basis of such feedbacks, the HKJC had asked the project architects, Herzog and de Meuron, to prepare the conceptual design with due regard to AMO's conservation requirements and international conservation practices. Noting the limited open space available on the site, the project architects suggested building a pedestrian walkway to link up SoHo and Lan Kwai Fong on different frontages of the site to ease pedestrian flow as no car park would be provided within the site. In view of the need to preserve the existing trees, the enlarged cracks at East Wing of D Hall, the unstable foundation of the existing buildings and the high level of the ground water table, excavation was rendered undesirable; the project architects also suggested making reference to the terracing concept of the Central Pedestrian Escalator. A 'scaffolding' concept was developed in planning a new structure above the upper courtyard to accommodate newly-created open green space /enclosed space as and when required, and allowing more cultural and arts facilities such as exhibition venues, theatre and cinema, to be provided within the new structure and natural sunlight to reach the upper courtyard for healthy plant growth. The height of the proposed observation deck would just clear that of the nearby building, the Centrium, so as to give the public an unobstructed panoramic view of Hong Kong. He pointed out that the scaffolding concept allows the new structure to be porous without being a glass enclosed building. The proposal called for an initial capital investment of \$1.8 billion with \$800 million earmarked for the old buildings and \$1 billion for the new building. Two-thirds of the existing buildings would be for commercial purpose, which would be self-sustainable, while 80% of the new structure would be used for arts and cultural facilities, which would need to be subsidised financially. Without the addition of cultural and arts venues, the compound would simply be developed into a shopping mall, which concept could easily be implemented by many developers. The HKJC envisaged a negative cash flow for the redeveloped compound for the initial three years of operation but expected that it would be able to operate on a self-sustainable basis in the long run. He quoted the HKJC's successful examples of the Ocean Park and the Kau Sai Chau Public Golf Course, adding that an independent company would be set up to look after the operation of the project. A Heritage Advisory Committee is proposed to be set up under the company to advise the Board on conservation-related matters, and membership from government, academia, professionals or concern groups would be welcomed. The HKJC would not own the land and did not ask for naming rights to the project. The proceeds of the project would be ploughed back into the project or other heritage conservation projects. The HKJC would continue its 6-month public consultation to listen to views and suggestions from the public in the hope that the project could be implemented successfully.

6. The Chairman thanked Mr William Yiu for the presentation.

Discussion Session

7. A member said that, from the AAB's point of view, the revitalization proposal should not adversely affect conservation of the special features of the heritage complex. From the planning perspective, the proposed new tall structure on the heritage site would increase the development density, affect the local environment and block the view of the residents of the buildings behind the compound. He asked if it was necessary to include the various arts and cultural facilities within this site.

8. Mr William Yiu said that, in line with HKJC principles of undertaking the project and in response to findings of the opinion survey, the HKJC intended to include arts and cultural elements in the project to create a destination for citizens of all ages. The proposed new structure in the upper courtyard aimed to provide public access to the observation deck to get a panoramic view of Hong Kong.

9. While supporting the HKJC's revitalizing proposal and the addition of a new structure for the provision of arts and cultural facilities therein, a member suggested that the project should make reference to the Preservation Requirements in paragraph 6 of Annex B of the paper, which stated that "The treatment to all buildings and structures on the site, both new and existing, shall be "reversible" and should enhance their style and appearance in order that the historic character of the Historic Site will be properly conserved". He asked if there would be more supporting structures than were necessary for the new building that would be taller than the maximum height of 77 mPD set for the complex in the previous conservation guidelines. He suggested adjusting the height and design of the new building to make it compatible with the compound's existing architectural style so as to obtain wider community support.

10. In response to the Chairman's enquiry, Mr William Yiu advised that the observation deck would be at a height of about 130 m above upper courtyard, which would be just above that of the adjacent building, the Centrium whereas the height of the main building was 80 m above upper courtyard.

11. A member said that the addition of new structures to a historic compound was not uncommon in the world, e.g. (Louvre Museum). However, the building appeared huge in size and might result in undesirable visual impact and high ventilation cost. He asked if the existing buildings within the site such as F Hall could be converted into performing venues by dismantling the internal cubicles within it.

12. Mr William Yiu said that the floor area of F Hall was just about one and a half times the size of the Heritage Discovery Centre's conference room on the ground floor and 4 times the conference room on the second floor. It was not big enough to house art and cultural facilities and it would be difficult to provide acoustic management in such an old building complex. He would nevertheless consider the member's suggestion. He added that the HKJC had been liaising with the Hong Kong Police Force to relocate the Police Museum from Coombe Road at the Peak where patronage was low, due to its location. Consideration was also being given to providing a museum of the Correctional Services Department at the complex to present the history of law and order in Hong Kong.

13. A member, Mr Almon Poon, declared interest as trustee of a charitable organization that owned a property in the neighbourhood of the CPS Compound. He fully supported the HKJC's revitalizing proposal to merge old and new structures at a historic site and provide a focal point for the narrow streets nearby where residents and tourists could enjoy the streetscape and a bird's eye view of the different facets of Hong Kong.

14. Noting that the provision of arts and cultural venues at the CPS Compound was based on the findings of the public opinion survey, a member asked if it was necessary to provide so many facilities there as planning of the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) was in progress. He was also concerned that the new iconic structure would outshine the historic buildings.

15. A member noted that there were already big performing venues in Central district and suggested that the new building should house small performing venues in the CPS Compound. The member referred to the lack of parking facilities at Kom Tom Hall, which was quite dangerous and inconvenient to the elderly and students, and considered that car parking spaces should be provided as it was expected that many families, including old and young, would visit the site.

16. The Chairman welcomed the HKJC's revitalizing proposal and donation, noting its past records of success and management. He asked about the traffic arrangements for such a big historic site, noting that it was fronted by narrow and sloping streets. He requested the HKJC to consider the need for the proposed architectural features on top of the new building to imitate the Victoria Peak, which might not be essential or relevant to the historic building complex but had greatly increased the height of the new building.

17. Mr William Yiu said that the HKJC had conducted a traffic study for the area and decided not to provide on-site parking as there would be a pedestrian walkway in the center of the site to ease pedestrian flow. The Central Pedestrian Escalator would be connected to the site over Hollywood Road just behind the Stable Block to encourage the public to walk to the site. The proposed arrangement had taken into account environmental considerations in view of the streets nearby which were already congested with traffic. He clarified that the provision of cultural and art facilities was not based on the public opinion survey. It was the outcome of discussions with cultural institutes such as the Performing Arts Academy to provide small-scale performing venues with a seating capacity of about 500 in Central District. Such small venues would not compete with the very different provisions in the WKCD. While the height of the new structure could be compressed, it would correspondingly reduce the open space. Thus, it was a combination of factors that had led to the present height of the proposed new structure.

18. A member noted that the current conceptual design deviated greatly from the conservation guidelines previously set by AMO that restricted the maximum height of any new development to 77mPD. He questioned the need for a landmark for every cultural project. He wondered if building a landmark was the personal wish of the architects to impose their personal style on the site.

19. A member supported the HKJC's revitalisation proposal of the CPS Compound and expressed confidence in their projects. While agreeing that the redeveloped CPS Compound would provide a destination site for the family, which the district was lacking, the member hoped that the HKJC would duly consider how the design of the new magnificent

building could maintain visual harmony with the rest of Central and Western District. The member personally considered walking to the site was acceptable as that would be a good way for one to appreciate the characteristics of a district.

20. A member shared the other members' concern about the visual harmony of the new and old buildings. Instead of focusing on the new building, he asked the HKJC to put more emphasis on the adaptive re-use of the historic buildings in future presentations and consider the need for loading/unloading area even if parking facilities would not be provided.

21. A member said that in the schematic design, the old and the new structures did not seem to be compatible, and that the huge new building was more eye-catching than the historic building complex. A better balance between conservation and development should be struck.

22. A member wondered whether it was necessary to add another iconic structure in the area which was already congested with buildings. He hoped that the HKJC would provide more design options to give the historic compound a more spacious and comfortable feel. For instance, trimming or simplifying the architectural features at the top of the new building would be an option.

23. A member suggested that the theme of the 'Origin of Law and Order' should be highlighted in the conservation of the Central Police Station, Former Central Magistracy and Victoria Prison.

24. A member opined that if Government would extend the planning of the CPS Compound to include the nearby Former Police Married Quarters Site at Hollywood Road and the URA project site at Graham Street and Lyndhurst Street, it would achieve an even better overall effect and would be more beneficial to the district.

25. A member shared the same view. He considered that the historic compound's design could be planned together with other historic buildings in the neighbourhood to bring out the historic significance of Central and Western district. For instance, the St John's Cathedral (Religion), the LegCo Building and Government House (Government Administration), the CPS Compound (Rule of Law and Order), Dr Sun Yat-sen Museum and Heritage Trail (Chinese and Hong Kong History), the University of Hong Kong (History of Higher Education in Hong Kong) could form a unique cluster to highlight the historical significance of the district.

26. In response to Members' views and suggestions, Mr William Yiu clarified that the new structure would not be self-sustainable and the project was planned for the people of Hong Kong. He noted the AAB's concern about the design of the new building and would discuss with the project architects about how best the old and new elements should be presented on site. He referred to the addition of new buildings to Louvre over the centuries to illustrate that people might have taken a different view of new additions to a historic building complex in the course of time. He added that the HKJC had presented a living example of the revitalization of the CPS Compound. Whether the proposal would materialize remained to be seen, he was pleased to note the public's positive attitude and the importance they attached to heritage conservation during the HKJC's public engagement exercises in the past month, which he considered had achieved their purpose.

Item 3 Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme (Presentation by Development Bureau)

Presentation Session

27. Miss Janet Wong said that since the special briefing on heritage conservation given by SDEV at the last AAB meeting of 10 October 2007, DEVB had further developed their approaches towards the 'Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme' (RHBTPS). She then elaborated on the scheme with a PowerPoint presentation (hard copy tabled for members' reference at the meeting), highlighting the following aspects for Members' reference:

- (a) Background Information/Mode of Operation;
- (b) Policy Statement on Heritage Conservation;
- (c) New Heritage Conservation Initiatives;
- (d) Successful Examples of Adaptive Re-use
- (e) Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme - in the form of social enterprise;
- (f) First Batch of 7 Historic Buildings;
- (g) Workflow Overview;
- (h) Interpretation of Social Enterprise;
- (i) Examples which can be considered

28. Miss Janet Wong added that the PowerPoint presentation had been uploaded onto DEVB's website and that interested parties could access the website for updated information. Comments and suggestions that would help to refine the details of the scheme would be most welcomed and could be e-mailed to: rhb_enquiry@devb.gov.hk.

Discussion Session

29. In response to the Chairman's enquiries, Miss Janet Wong advised that Government, being the land and property owner of the buildings, would be responsible for major structural repairs/slope works whereas the NGOs would take care of minor repairs and routine maintenance by adopting a common sense approach to achieve administrative simplicity in order to encourage applications. With regard to assessment of the applications, Miss Janet Wong said that preference would be given to those who would use the building with public interface to promote the spirit of social enterprise. Applications for using the historic buildings as offices or centres of professional bodies such as the HKIA would also be considered if it would be used as a basis for out-reach services. DEVB would take into account the number of applications received and the relative merits of their proposals in processing the applications.

30. A member asked under what circumstances would the applicant be required to submit an application to the Town Planning Board (TPB). Miss Janet Wong said that application to the TPB would be required when the proposal involved a change of the designated land use of the site.

31. Mr Anthony Kwan advised that the seven historic building sites identified for the RHBTPS were designated for different uses such as G/IC and Village Development on the relevant statutory outline zoning plans. Some uses were always permitted without application

(Schedules 1) while other uses were permitted with application to the TPB (Schedule 2). If the social enterprise fell within Schedule 2, an application had to be made to the TPB. He noted that a number of the possible uses for the first batch of historic buildings were permitted under Schedule 1 and that there were few requiring application to the TPB. However, he pointed out that application to TPB for change of land use would take time as it would involve gazetting as well as public hearing and submission of the plan to the CE in Council if objection was received. Such processes might take more than one year and would understandably delay the progress of the project. Nevertheless, PlanD would provide all the relevant information to the applicant who could further consult PlanD if in doubt.

32. A member suggested that the effectiveness of the applicant organization in bringing out the historical significance and the architectural style of the historic building, as well as the benefit to the community should be included as the major vetting criteria. To speed up the vetting process, he proposed that PlanD should rezone all the subject sites to G/IC first. Considering the limited resources of some NGOs, he also suggested confining the schematic design of the proposals to 3 pages for the sake of fairness and standardisation. The Chairman, however, noted that rezoning of some of the subject sites to G/IC might not be required as in the case of Lui Seng Chun if it was to be used as a Chinese Medicine Shop. Though, he agreed that one-stop service should be provided to facilitate the applicants.

33. Miss Janet Wong said that she would consider the member's suggestions on the major vetting criteria. She would work out with PlanD the utmost assistance they could offer to the applicants, taking into account PlanD's heavy workload.

34. A member asked about the definition of social enterprise given that it was a relatively new concept. Miss Janet Wong said that they would look for a balanced mix of big and small NGOs provided that the applicant could demonstrate its ability in running the business properly. She added that Government's declared objective of social enterprise was tripartite. While it would promote social enterprise, it would also encourage NGOs to collaborate with the business sector to achieve a social objective as any proceeds derived would be ploughed back into the operation or expansion of the original proposal.

35. A member pointed out that the major vetting criteria of 'How the historic significance of the building can be brought out effectively in the process of adaptive re-use' might pose a hurdle as it would be difficult for the applicant organisation to bring out the historical significance of buildings like Mei Ho House, Lai Chi Kok Hospital or Lui Seng Chun in the revitalisation process. To encourage NGOs to come forward with proposals, he suggested that such stringent criteria should not be spelled out but proposals which could meet such criteria would be given special credit. This would give both Government and the applicant organisations more flexibility.

36. While agreeing that there should be more flexibility, Miss Janet Wong explained that such criteria had to be included considering that the buildings selected for the scheme were historic buildings and that all proposals would be subject to the same criteria to maintain fairness. Thus, it would be a comparison of the relative merits of the detailed proposals.

37. A member suggested that some kind of trustee be set up to monitor the operation of the social enterprise to relieve Government of the burden in case the NGOs had management or staff problems. He also proposed that Government should provide extra

support to the NGOs where required, e.g. access from the main road to the historic building. Miss Janet Wong said that while Government did not have resources to set up a heritage trust for the time being, it was going to start some in-depth research in that direction and consideration would be given to establish a heritage trust in the long run.

38. A member asked if it was necessary for the NGOs to take up the whole building like Mei Ho House, given the huge overhead cost, which might pose a financial burden. Miss Janet Wong said that Government kept an open mind and would encourage agencies to pair up and make a joint submission rather than Government doing the matchmaking. From administration and management points of view, preference would be given to one application for the whole building. However, flexibility would be exercised if there was no applicant for large historic building like the North Kowloon Magistracy.

**Item 4 Report on Archaeological Investigation of Former Police Married Quarters Site at Hollywood Road
(Board Paper AAB/34/2007-08)**

39. Ms Esa Leung briefed Members on the report on the archaeological investigation of the Former Police Married Quarters Site at Hollywood Road, highlighting the following aspects for Members' reference:

- (a) The background and history of the site;
- (b) Aims of site investigation;
- (c) The fieldwork period from 19 March to 25 July 2007;
- (d) Two phases of the site investigation:
 - (i) In the first phase, test grids/trenches were excavated on the upper platform (car park area) and the lower platform (playground of the former Central School) of the site;
 - (ii) In the second phase, subsurface investigation was mainly carried out at the upper platform in order to obtain more information about the features identified
- (e) Features identified at the playground and car park area;
- (f) Location of Shing Wong Temple's foundation could not be confirmed; Further site excavation would not be conducted taking into account its adverse effect on the retaining walls of Hollywood Road and Shing Wong Street, and the trees on them, the previous surface of playground in the lower platform, and the electricity station and pedestrians of Shing Wong Street; and
- (g) for the sake of public safety, all the excavated areas were properly backfilled after recording under the monitoring of AMO's archaeological team and registered structural engineer.

40. A member inquired about the extent of discovery under which the AMO would proceed with further site investigation and the time, manpower and funding required. Ms Esa Leung replied that before the investigation, AMO did not know that the foundations of the former Central School still existed underground and as explained earlier, the chance of finding other undisturbed foundations at Block A was relatively slim.

41. In response to the Chairman's enquiry, Mr Kevin Sun advised that nothing was discovered at T8 (the covered car park area) except for some horizontal granite blocks located at the footing in the northern part of the foundation plan. Further excavation revealed decomposed granite with no trace of human activity. As such, excavation was stopped due to the hard rocks which could not be excavated.

42. Dr Louis Ng added that the aim of the site investigation was to ascertain if relics of the former Central School were buried underground. It was fortunate that the original school playground surface had been preserved in good condition due to the fact that the cheapest construction method of building on top of the existing foundation was used in the 1950s. However, due to subsequent construction works, only about 40% of the foundation of the school was still preserved. While further excavation might yield some more discoveries, the site investigation had already enabled AMO to understand how the foundation of the former Central School was laid. He therefore considered it more worthwhile to divert the resources to conduct further excavation for the Former Mountain Lodge at the Victoria Peak Garden where the foundation was preserved in good condition.

43. In response to the Chairman's inquiry on the next course of action, Dr Louis Ng said that the foundations of the former Central School had been considerably disturbed to such an extent that total in-situ preservation of the site might not be justified. However, the historical significance of the remaining structures within the site such as the perimeter walls and the granite steps was affirmed. Therefore, it was suggested in the conclusion of the report that any revitalization proposal should be based on the premise that the remaining features of Central school would be preserved, having regard to its historical significance to the development of Hong Kong.

44. Mr Thomas Chow added that the CE had announced in his 2007-08 Policy Address that the site would be removed from the List of Sites for Sale by Application for a year and proposals would be invited from the community on its revitalization. Since DEVB was considering how to collect public views on its revitalization systematically, members could make use of the meeting to express their views and suggestions on its revitalisation.

45. A member commended AMO staff for preparing such a detailed investigation report. The member further asked if the first statement in paragraphs 7 and 8 ('The heritage value of these remains of the school foundation uncovered can be assessed in terms of their authenticity and integrity' and 'The heritage value of the remaining structures within the site mainly lies in their association with the former Central School') of the paper were just an expert's academic interpretation of the heritage value of the relics and there was no general conclusion to suggest that the site's heritage value was low. To avoid possible misunderstanding, he also sought clarification on whether 'in-situ preservation' in the following statement 'their overall heritage value has also been diminished to such a degree that the total in-situ preservation cannot be justified' would refer to monument status where the site had to be kept intact, which he also considered inappropriate as this would affect its revitalisation proposal.

46. Mr Thomas Chow confirmed that the member's interpretation was correct, as the heading of paragraphs 6 to 8 referred to the AMO's assessment of the structures discovered, not the site. He referred to the last part of paragraph 8 to illustrate that the site had its heritage value in its association with Dr Sun Yat-sen and other exemplary graduates of the school, who became important figures in the history of China and Hong Kong, which was a valuable

memory of Hong Kong. He added that Government was considering revitalization of the whole site rather than just preserving the remains in isolation. Thus, total in-situ preservation would not be meaningful and some reinforcement work might have to be carried out for safety reason if the site was to be opened to the public.

47. A member referred to her recent visit to Beijing Street (北京路) in Guangzhou where the centre of the street was installed with glass panel through which layers of foundations belonging to Yuan, Min and Qing dynasties were displayed, and suggested that Government could consider displaying the foundation of the former Central School in a similar way.

48. A member referred to AMO's research and archaeological investigation, which identified a number of the remaining structures of the former Central School and gradually unveiled the interesting history of the site, and the recent Exhibition on 'Queen's College · Hong Kong · China - History and Memories of 145 Years' at the Central Library, which provided some more relevant information. He noted that Government would soon invite revitalization proposals on the site and suggested that DEVB together with AAB could be more proactive in organising activities such as workshop and seminar to consult old boys of Queen's College, local residents, professional bodies, conservators, developers, etc. on its revitalisation.

49. A member shared the same view that the AAB could take a proactive role in preserving and revealing the interesting history of the site.

50. A member inquired about CE's intention of removing the site from the List of Sites for Sale by Application for a year so that the AAB could consider what appropriate course of action could be taken.

51. Mr Thomas Chow said that the community would make use of the one-year period to come up with a consensus or mainstream revitalisation proposal. He would also convey AAB's views on its public engagement role to DEVB such that AAB's participatory role could tie in with DEVB's overall plan in inviting revitalisation proposals for the site.

52. To enable the AAB to draw up a revitalisation proposal for the site within a year's time, a member asked if Government had set any guideline/baseline for the revitalization proposal such as whether the staff quarters could be demolished to expose the foundation of the former Central School.

53. A member referred to paragraph 8.4 of the report and suggested that the AMO should, based on the relevant guidelines or ordinance, advise on the remaining features which had to be preserved in-situ or could be relocated before the AAB embarked on a discussion of the revitalisation proposal.

54. The Chairman considered that the agenda of the day was to note the findings of the archaeological investigation report prepared by AMO whereas discussion of the follow-up action or the revitalization proposal of the site could be arranged on a separate occasion with the members' consensus.

55. Dr Louis Ng referred to criticism by conservation activists on AMO's backfilling of the site and reiterated that it was one of the methods used in Archaeology to ensure site

safety. He said that AMO had no intention to conceal anything from the public. As the site was backfilled with sand, future inspection of underground features would be possible by simply excavating the backfill.

**Item 5 Proposed AAB Retreat
(Board Paper AAB/35/2007-08)**

56. The Chairman briefed Members on the proposed retreat, which was common with other public bodies, and considered that the proposed retreat would provide a good forum for old and new members to deliberate on relevant issues such as review of the operation of the AAB and the relevant ordinance.

57. After some discussion, it was agreed that the Secretariat would further consult Members on the proposed dates of 15 December or 22 December for the retreat. If a majority of members would not be available on these two dates, alternative dates would be proposed.

58. Mr Thomas Chow referred to some possible topics of discussion outlined in paragraph 5 of the paper and said that if members would like to propose other topics, they could inform the Secretariat before the retreat.

Item 6 Any Other Business

Po Toi Rock Carving

59. A member raised the problems of cyanobacteria at the Po Toi Rock Carving. Ms Esa Leung responded by referring to an e-mail forwarded to members the day before, in which the writer complained about the conservation measures taken by AMO and alleged that the measures had caused the spread of a black stain, a bacteria named cyanobacteria, which peeled off the rock surface and damaged the rock carving. She explained with some slides presentation that a glass shelter was built in the past to prevent the rock carvings, a declared monument, from damage. The black stain was discovered by AMO staff during regular site inspection and the problem was referred to the in-house conservators. After some cleansing treatment, the black stain had been removed without adversely affecting the rocks and had not returned. According to the conservators, a number of techniques had been applied to improve the carvings' condition such as using moss retardant to prevent further vegetation growth and coating of silane-based hydrophobising agent to act as water-repellent. However, the writer complained that the water-repellent agent would further damage the rock carvings as water vapour trapped inside the rock would expand and further damage the rock surface. She said that the water repellent, which was waterproof, porous and would reinforce the rock surfaces, had been used overseas for over ten years. She also referred to the writer's proposal to form a consultancy comprising various professionals and the writer himself and considered it more appropriate for staff of the Conservation Section, being in a neutral position, to handle the restoration of the rock carvings. Members noted her report.

60. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Antiquities and Monuments Office
Leisure and Cultural Services Department
April 2008

Ref: LCS AM 22/3