

ANTIQUITIES ADVISORY BOARD

Minutes of the 156th Meeting
held on Monday, 24 October 2011 at 11:00 a.m.
in Conference Room, Hong Kong Heritage Discovery Centre
Kowloon Park, Haiphong Road, Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon

Present: Mr Bernard Charnwut Chan, GBS, JP (Chairman)
Dr Anissa Chan Wong Lai-kuen, MH, JP
Ms Susanna Chiu Lai-kuen
Professor Ho Pui-yin
Mr Henry Ho Kin-chung
Mr Philip Kan Siu-lun
Mr Tim Ko Tim-keung
Mr Tony Lam Chung-wai
Mr Andrew Lam Siu-lo, JP
Dr Lau Chi-pang
Dr Lee Ho-yin
Mr Laurence Li Lu-jen
Professor Tracey Lu Lie-dan
Dr Ng Cho-nam, BBS, JP
Ms Janet Pau Heng-ting
Professor Simon Shen Xu-hui
Professor Billy So Kee-long
Dr Joseph Ting Sun-pao

Ms Becky Lam (Secretary)
Senior Executive Officer (Antiquities and Monuments)
Leisure and Cultural Services Department

Absent with Apologies: Mrs Mariana Cheng Cho Chi-on, BBS, JP
Professor Chung Po-yin

Ms Lilian Law Suk-kwan, JP
Mr Conrad Wong Tin-cheung, JP
Mr Yeung Yiu-chung, BBS, JP

In Attendance:

Development Bureau

Ms Grace Lui
Deputy Secretary (Works)1

Miss Vivian Ko
Commissioner for Heritage

Miss Queenie Lee
Assistant Secretary (Heritage Conservation) 4

Leisure and Cultural Services Department

Mr Chung Ling-hoi, JP
Deputy Director (Culture)

Mr Tom Ming
Executive Secretary (Antiquities and Monuments)

Mr Kevin Sun
Curator (Education and Publicity)

Ms Fione Lo
Curator (Historical Buildings) 1

Ms Angela Siu
Curator (Historical Buildings) 2

Dr Alan Fung
Assistant Curator I (Building Survey)

Planning Department

Mr T K Lee, JP
Assistant Director/Metro

Architectural Services Department

Mr Fong Siu-wai

Assistant Director (Property Services)

Opening Remarks

The Chairman thanked Members and representatives from government departments for attending the meeting.

**Item 1 Confirmation of Minutes
(Board Minutes AAB/4/2011-12)**

2. The minutes of the 155th Meeting held on 2 September 2011 were confirmed without amendment.

**Item 2 Confirmation of Notes of Briefing
(Board Minutes AAB/5/2011-12)**

3. The notes of Briefing on the Consultancy Studies on the heritage value of Ho Tung Gardens held on 10 October 2011 were confirmed with the following amendment :

- (i) Proposed by Ms Janet Pau – to revise paragraph 15 as follows :

“In reply to Ms Janet Pau’s question, Dr Lee Ho-yin accorded Ho Tung Gardens with the highest heritage value when comparing Ho Tung Gardens with another three major pieces of Chinese Renaissance architecture in Hong Kong, namely Haw Par Mansion, King Yin Lei and Dragon Gardens.”.

Item 3 Matters Arising

4. There were no matters arising being raised in the meeting.

**Item 4 Assessment of 1 444 Historic Buildings - Finalisation of the Gradings of Proposed Graded Buildings and Results of Assessment of New Items
(Board Paper AAB/25/2011-12)**

5. The Chairman invited Dr Alan Fung to take Members through all items listed in the Annexes with the aid of PowerPoint.
6. In response to Andrew Lam's enquiries about the significance of the Hindu Temple in Wong Nai Chung Road, Happy Valley (Number¹ 576), Dr Alan Fung explained that the said Hindu Temple was the only one in urban area among the list of 1 444 historic buildings and the Expert Panel had already taken into account the significance of the role played by the Indians in Hong Kong in its assessment. Dr Joseph Ting observed that many religious ceremonies were still being held in this Hindu Temple nowadays.
7. In reply to Dr Lau Chi-pang's question, Mr Tom Ming said that in assessing the proposed grading of the Hindu Temple (Number 576), the heritage value of other ethnic religious buildings such as the Jamia Mosque in Central (Number 470) and Sikh Temple in Wan Chai (Number 534) have been considered.
8. Having discussed the proposed gradings for No. 14, 22, 24, 31 Lee Yick Street, Yuen Long Kau Hui in Yuen Long (Numbers 690, 1329, 492 and 378), the Chairman questioned the different proposed gradings for these historic buildings which were in similar form. Mr Tom Ming explained that different gradings were accorded to the buildings based on the assessment result of their respective heritage value.
9. After deliberation, Members agreed that the building at No. 31 Lee Yick Street, Yuen Long Kau Hui in Yuen Long (Number 378), which was currently proposed to be accorded with nil grade, should be reviewed by the Expert Panel by comparing with other similar historic buildings in the area.
10. Mr Tom Ming briefed Members that having considered the views and supplementary information collected during the public consultation, the Expert Panel maintained their recommendation to accord a proposed Grade 2 status to the Dragon Garden in Tsuen Wan (Number 226). The proposed grading was acceptable to the owner.

¹ This numbering of the historic buildings mentioned in the minutes follows that adopted for the 1444 territory-wide historic buildings listed in the AAB Board Paper AAB/8/2009-10 on the proposed gradings of all these historic buildings.

11. Dr Lee Ho-yin expressed that the overall aesthetic value of Dragon Garden was lower than Ho Tung Gardens. The Chairman and Mr Laurence Li emphasised that no matter whether there would be a consensus between the Government and the owner on the future management of the Dragon Garden, the grading should focus on the heritage value of the site.

12. Having compared the historic, architectural and social significance of the Dragon Garden with another three major pieces of Chinese Renaissance residence in Hong Kong, Members endorsed the proposed grading for the Dragon Garden.

13. Dr Ng Cho-nam suggested that the Main Building and Villa of Salesian Mission House in Chai Wan Road (Numbers 764 and 795) should be accorded with higher grading in view of its unique style of the buildings.

14. Mr Tim Ko pointed out that a large number of wounded soldiers and medical personnels were murdered at the Salesian Mission House by the Japanese when the building was used as a field hospital by the military during the Battle of Hong Kong in 1941. He therefore agreed with Dr Ng Cho-nam that the Salesian Mission House should be accorded with higher grading.

15. Members agreed that the grading of the Main Building and Villa of Salesian Mission House in Chai Wan Road (Number 764 and 795) should be re-considered by the Expert Panel.

16. In response to Dr Lau Chi-pang's question about the modern renovation works of the Lap Wo Sai Kui and its Entrance Gate in Lap Wo Tsuen, Sha Tau Kok (Numbers 1119 and 1120), Mr Tom Ming explained that the recent renovation works did not affect the authenticity of the buildings. Mr Tony Lam and Dr Lee Ho-yin shared similar view and observed that such alterations were reversible and had little impact on the integrity of the buildings.

17. After deliberation on each item listed in Annexes A and B, Members endorsed the proposed gradings of all items except the building at No. 31 Lee Yick Street, Yuen Long Kau Hui in Yuen Long (Number 378), the Main Building and Villa of Salesian Mission House in Chai Wan Road (Number 764 and 795), which would need to be reviewed by the Expert Panel.

18. Mr Tom Ming reported that in light of the views and information collected during the public consultation on the proposed grading of No. 23 Coombe Road, the Expert Panel had revisited the case and recommended revising the proposed grading for the historic building from Grade 3 to Grade 2.

19. Mr Tony Lam informed the meeting that the Hong Kong Institute of Architects (HKIA) considered that the building merited a Grade 1 status. He personally supported HKIA's views since the historic building, built in 1887, was one of the oldest surviving European houses at the Peak area.

20. Dr Lee Ho-yin said that the building was a rare piece of architecture in Hong Kong.

21. In response to Mr Henry Ho's enquiry, Mr Tom Ming briefed Members that the lawyer of the owner of No. 23 Coombe Road had written to the Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO) a number of times requesting an extension of the public consultation period for the owner to conduct an heritage assessment of, and prepare preservation-cum-development schemes for, the building. However, a set of demolition plans in respect of the building had lately been submitted to the Buildings Department for approval. In view of the demolition threat, it was desirable to finalise the grading of the building at the meeting.

22. Dr Lau Chi-pang considered that the building was of significant historic value and its architectural style was a reflection of the colonial history of Hong Kong. He supported upgrading the historic building to Grade 1.

23. Dr Joseph Ting and Mr Tim Ko concurred with Dr Lau Chi-pang that the building should be accorded with higher grading. Mr Tim Ko said that a few spots in the vicinity were associated with the World War II and suggested grouping them together to develop a heritage trail.

24. Noting that there were a few buildings of similar style built in the 19th century in the Peak area, Mr Andrew Lam suggested comparing these buildings with the building at No. 23 Coombe Road before the Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB) made a decision.

25. The Chairman concluded that AAB was of the view that the building at No. 23 Coombe Road should be accorded with a Grade 2 status or above pending AMO's provision of further information on similar historic buildings in the area for comparison.

**Item 5 Declaration of Ho Tung Gardens as a Monument
(Board Paper AAB/26/2011-12)**

26. The Chairman welcomed Professor Wong Siu-lun, Dr Victor Zheng, Dr Lee Ho-yin and Mr Curry Tse, and thanked them for attending the meeting to answer enquiries on the consultancies recently undertaken by them on the heritage value of Ho Tung Gardens.

27. Before deliberation, Dr Lee Ho-yin clarified that he was one of the consultants for the studies and he would answer enquiries in the capacity of a consultant instead of an AAB Member in the course of discussion of this agenda item.

28. Mr Tom Ming reported that Members were briefed on the findings of the consultancies on the heritage value of Ho Tung Gardens on 10 October 2011. The consultancy reports had been uploaded onto AMO's website. In addition, a public forum was organised on 15 October 2011 to provide an occasion for the public to discuss the heritage value and conservation of Ho Tung Gardens. He said that the consultancy studies confirmed the outstanding heritage significance of Ho Tung Gardens. It was considered that Ho Tung Gardens had reached the high threshold of heritage value for declaration as a monument under the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (the Ordinance).

29. The Chairman invited Members to express their views on the declaration proposal.

30. In response to Mr Andrew Lam's enquiry, Dr Lee Ho-yin stressed that the mansion of Ho Tung Gardens was set within distinctive gardens, and the gardens themselves were an integral part of the place. Lady Clara Ho Tung, a devoted Buddhist, planned and created the gardens with Buddhist elements, which were also of intangible heritage value.

31. In response to Prof Simon Shen's enquiry about Sir Robert Ho Tung's

“Chinese” identity, Dr Victor Zheng explained that his “Chinese” identity could be revealed by the comments of the then Governor of Hong Kong, Sir Frederick Lugard, as well as Sir Robert Ho Tung’s introduction of himself as a Chinese on many public occasions and his style of living as a Chinese.

32. Prof Tracey Lu, Dr Lau Chi-pang and Mr Laurence Li shared the view that there was no definite answer to the identity of Sir Robert Ho Tung. Dr Lau Chi-pang and Mr Laurence Li however, considered that this would not diminish the heritage value of Ho Tung Gardens.

33. Dr Lee Ho-yin added that Sir Robert Ho Tung was regarded as a non-European if not a Chinese. Otherwise he would not need to obtain the Government’s permission to live at the Peak area.

34. Mr Laurence Li also pointed out that the significant historic value of Ho Tung Gardens was supported by its close association with Sir Robert Ho Tung, Lady Clara Ho Tung, their children including General Robert Ho Shai-lai and other prominent family members as well as Sir Robert Ho Tung’s strong will to choose the conspicuous Chinese aesthetic character for his mansion despite the legislative control at that time.

35. Prof Tracey Lu said that preservation of just the mansion alone would greatly diminish the integrity of Ho Tung Gardens. She supported that both the mansion and gardens should be preserved.

36. Ms Janet Pau shared similar views with Prof Tracey Lu. In reply to Ms Janet Pau’s question, Dr Lee Ho-yin opined that alternations to the interior of the mansion and development at the garage and the tennis court area could be considered because the natural landscape and the aesthetic expression of Ho Tung Gardens might not be significantly affected by such alterations or development.

37. Dr Victor Zheng explained to Members that the mansion and the gardens were integral parts of Ho Tung Gardens and their preservation as a whole was important because :

- (i) the gardens was for Lady Clara Ho Tung to practise Buddhism;
- (ii) Lady Clara Ho Tung moved to the Peak area for the health of her

children after the outbreak of the bubonic plague in late 19th century.
The gardens were therefore a crucial part of the site;

- (iii) Sir Robert Ho Tung brought three separate land lots to form a single piece of land for Ho Tung Gardens, which reflected his intention to regard Ho Tung Gardens as a whole entity.

38. With Members' views and comments already expressed, the Chairman concluded that the AAB unanimously supported the proposal of declaring Ho Tung Gardens as a monument under the Ordinance.

Item 6 Any Other Business

39. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

Antiquities and Monuments Office
Leisure and Cultural Services Department
March 2012

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