

ANTIQUITIES ADVISORY BOARD

Minutes of the 157th Meeting
held on Wednesday, 23 November 2011 at 3:05 p.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 Chung Po-yin
Mr Henry Ho Kin-chung
Professor Ho Pui-yin
Mr Philip Kan Siu-lun
Mr Tim Ko Tim-keung
Mr Tony Lam Chung-wai
Mr Andrew Lam Siu-lo, JP
Ms Lilian Law Suk-kwan, JP
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
Mr Conrad Wong Tin-cheung, JP
Mr Yeung Yiu-chung, BBS, JP

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
Dr Lau Chi-pang
Dr Joseph Ting Sun-pao

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)

Dr Louis Ng
Assistant Director (Heritage and Museums)

Mr Tom Ming
Executive Secretary (Antiquities and Monuments)

Mr Kenneth Tam
Chief Heritage Manager (Antiquities and Monuments)

Mrs Ada Yau
Curator (Archaeology)

Mr Kevin Sun
Curator (Education and Publicity)

Ms Fione Lo
Curator (Historical Buildings) 1

Planning Department

Mr T K Lee, JP

Assistant Director/Metro

Architectural Services Department

Mr Fong Siu-wai

Assistant Director (Property Services)

Mr S L Lam

Senior Maintenance Surveyor/Heritage

Buildings Department

Ms Grace Cheng

Building Surveyor/Heritage Unit 1

(for item 2 and item 3 only)

Opening Remarks

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

**Item 1 Matters Arising and Progress Report
(Board Paper AAB/27/2011-12)**

2. To follow up with the discussion at the last meeting on whether the grading for the building at No. 23 Coombe Road should be accorded with a Grade 2 status or above, Mr Tom Ming briefed Members that at the request of Members, the Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO) had located another eight historic buildings on the Peak of residential use which were similar to the building at No. 23 Coombe Road for comparison. Ms Fione Lo then took Members through all these buildings with the aid of PowerPoint presentation.

3. Noting that modifications had been made to the roof of the building at No. 23 Coombe Road, Mr Andrew Lam asked if the other buildings had undergone significant alterations. Ms Fione Lo confirmed that most of the architectural features

of these buildings were retained despite some alterations and modifications.

4. Prof Tracey Lu considered that modifications made to the roof would not cause significant adverse impact to the authenticity of a building provided that its original layout, materials and characters were retained.

5. Mr Tony Lam supported according a Grade 1 status to the building at No 23 Coombe Road having considered that it was one of the two buildings built in the 19th century on the Peak.

6. Dr Lee Ho-yin expressed concerns about the impact on the redevelopment of the building after the according of a Grade 1 status. The Chairman remarked that AAB should focus on the building's heritage significance in considering the grading of historic sites / buildings, irrespective of any development plans for the sites / buildings. Dr Lee Ho-yin suggested paying a visit to the building before grading. Mr Tom Ming advised that there might be difficulties in obtaining consent from the owner / tenant for access to the building.

7. Prof Ho Pui-yin echoed with the Chairman's view in respect of AAB's focus in grading assessment. Prof Ho Pui-yin and Mr Tim Ko both considered the building valuable because of the contribution of J.J. Francis, the first owner of the building, toward the historic development of Hong Kong :

- (i) J.J. Francis was one of the members of a committee to investigate the issue of *mui-tsai* (indentured Chinese girls working as unpaid domestic servants) and this committee recommended the constitution of a Chinese association i.e. Po Leung Kuk, for the protection of women and girls. He assisted in drawing up the rules for enacting the formation of the said association; and
- (ii) J.J. Francis was also the chairman of the committee formed by the Sanitary Board to cope with the bubonic plague that attacked Hong Kong in 1894.

8. With the voting result of 9 Members supporting Grade 1 and 7 Members supporting Grade 2, the Chairman concluded that the building at No. 23 Coombe Road be accorded with a Grade 1 status.

9. Mr Tom Ming then reported the progress of other major heritage issues, inter alia, the declaration of King's College and School House of St. Stephen's College as monuments, which would be gazetted on 2 December 2011 under the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (Cap. 53) (the Ordinance).

10. He further reported that with Members' support to the proposed declaration of Ho Tung Gardens as a monument under the Ordinance at its meeting on 24 October 2011, AMO was proceeding with the statutory procedures as required under the Ordinance.

11. The Chairman referred Members to an article written by a relative of the owner of Dragon Garden (Number¹ 226) who was not aware that the building had been accorded a Grade 2 status at the last AAB meeting. Mr Tom Ming and Ms Fione Lo confirmed that a notification letter had been sent to the owner informing him of the proposed grading and his consent had been obtained before confirmation of the proposed grading.

Item 2 Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) on Old Tai Po Police Station (Board Paper AAB/28/2011-12)

12. The Chairman introduced the presentation team:

Ms Idy Wong

Head of Sustainable Living and Agriculture, Kadoorie Farm
and Botanic Garden;

Mr Denis Ng

Head of Facilities, Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden;

Mr Billy Tam

Director, Thomas Chow Architects;

Mr Humphrey Wong

Director, Meta4 Design Forum Limited;

Mr Henry Lo

Project Manager, Centre for Architectural Heritage Research,
The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

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.

13. Mr Henry Lo presented to Members the proposal of converting the Old Tai Po Police Station into the “Green Hub for Sustainable Living” which would serve as a field study / education / visitor centre to help the public understand the most pressing ecological and social concerns of modern life. He briefed Members in detail on the historical background, architectural merits, key character-defining elements of the compound, the proposed works and mitigation measures.

14. Dr Lee Ho-yin expressed his appreciation of the proposed works and mitigation measures as suggested in the HIA.

15. In response to Mr Conrad Wong’s enquiry, Mr Henry Lo explained that the proposed fire services installation would be visible after removal of the false ceiling.

16. The Chairman concluded that AAB was supportive of the findings of the HIA on the Old Tai Po Police Station and further consultation with AAB to finalise the HIA report would not be necessary.

**Item 3 HIA on Blue House Cluster
(Board Paper AAB/29/2011-12)**

17. The Chairman introduced the presentation team:

Mr Chris Law

Chairman of Steering Committee of Viva Blue House Project,
St. James’ Settlement;

Ms Suki Chau

Project-in-charge, St. James’ Settlement;

Mr David Fung

Senior Manager, St. James’ Settlement;

Mr Eric Lee

Director of Conservation, LWK & Partners;

Mr Kenneth Tse

Director, Meta4 Design Forum Limited.

18. Mr Chris Law briefed Members on their proposal of converting the Blue House Cluster (BHC) into “Viva Blue House” which would serve as a multi-functional

services complex inheriting wisdom and traditional ways of living. Since only the Orange House would be converted into office, disturbance to the buildings would be kept to the minimum. Mr Eric Lee then explained in detail the heritage significance, key character-defining elements of the BHC, the proposed works and mitigation measures. Ms Suki Chau also highlighted the core elements of the revitalisation project which would reflect the cultural significance of the BHC.

19. In response to the questions raised by Prof Tracey Lu and Mr Andrew Lam, Mr Eric Lee explained the following conservation measures :

- (i) the existing kitchen would be modified to accommodate a new bathroom and a kitchen;
- (ii) timber floor and joists would be repaired and preserved;
- (iii) routine monitoring and proper maintenance would be carried out after operation;
- (iv) building fabrics used for restoration would be compatible with the original materials;
- (v) brick walls and timber staircases would be retained and appropriate structural repairs would be arranged.

20. In reply to the enquiries by Mr Tony Lam, Prof Tracey Lu and Ms Lilian Law, Ms Suki Chau explained that one of the purposes of the project was to provide accommodation at affordable prices for the existing residents. The project would emphasise preservation of the historic buildings as well as the upkeep of local community networks.

21. The Chairman concluded that AAB was supportive of the findings of the HIA on the BHC and further consultation with AAB to finalise the HIA report would not be necessary.

Item 4 Any Other Business

22. To address the rising public aspirations for grading of the Central Government Offices (CGO) after the announcement of the revised redevelopment scheme of CGO by the Development Bureau (DEVB), the Chairman sought Members' views on whether CGO, though not an item on the list of 1 444 historic buildings, should be accorded with priority in grading. He also sought Members' opinions on

whether the three buildings of CGO, i.e. Main Wing, East Wing and West Wing, should be graded individually.

23. Prof Chung Po-yin opined that the “Government Hill” should be considered as an organic whole and she supported a holistic conservation approach because the area represented the organic development since 1841 with strong historical atmosphere and the three buildings were coherently designed and developed with remarkable colonial characteristics.

24. Prof Simon Shen pointed out that a holistic assessment had been adopted for grading Queen’s Pier by AAB and he considered that the same approach should be applied to CGO.

25. Mr Tom Ming briefed Members that the term “Government Hill” appeared on maps as early as 1842. However, there were no definite boundaries for the so-called “Government Hill”. It refers generally to an area of the present day Government House, Former French Mission Building, St John’s Cathedral, CGO and others. A number of these historic buildings in the area had been declared as monuments under the Ordinance and therefore were accorded with statutory protection. Given the background, the focus of the said grading should be on CGO.

26. In answering the Chairman’s enquiry on the practicability of grading CGO’s buildings as one complex or as three separate buildings, Mr Tom Ming explained that in accordance with the existing practice of AAB, buildings / structures constructed in different periods would be graded individually. On the other hand, one single grading could be given to several buildings / structures if they were built at the same time to form a harmonious integral cluster such as the walled villages in the New Territories.

27. Mr Andrew Lam was of the view that the grading of the CGO should take into account its historical background and the evolution of “Government Hill”. However, he could hardly accord a grading to the “Government Hill” under the existing grading mechanism.

28. Mr Yeung Yiu-chung echoed with Mr Andrew Lam’s view of not grading the “Government Hill” but he would support grading the CGO.

29. Mr Laurence Li shared similar views with Mr Andrew Lam. He opined that AAB considered the heritage value of historic buildings from a point-line-area perspective in the ongoing grading assessment of 1 444 historic buildings, and thus a holistic approach had been adopted in recent years. He therefore supported grading CGO under the existing mechanism.
30. Ms Grace Lui reminded Members of the conclusions and recommendations of Mr Michael Morrison in his consultancy study of CGO, which were made after a holistic and detailed assessment.
31. Dr Lee Ho-yin and Mr Tony Lam opined that the East Wing, Main Wing and West Wing were planned to be constructed in phases, i.e. during the years of 1954, 1956 and 1959 respectively. They considered that the three buildings of CGO should be regarded as an integral compound.
32. Prof Ng Cho-nam proposed that one single grading should be given to the CGO and Battery Path as well. He also expressed concerns about the public sentiments arising from the proposed commercial redevelopment of West Wing.
33. Prof Ho Pui-yin commented that the three buildings of CGO were a piece of functionalist style architecture which reflected the British colonial rule in Hong Kong in the 1950s. She was worried that the proposed redevelopment of West Wing would adversely affect the setting formed by the Government House and the CGO.
34. Ms Lilian Law agreed that the grading assessment of CGO should be accorded with priority. However, the assessment of the cultural landscape and the boundary of the “Government Hill” could be deliberated later.
35. Ms Janet Pau agreed that the West Wing of CGO was of high social significance as the public used to gather outside the West Wing after protests over the past decades, thereby perpetuating a collective memory of the community. She also considered that the CGO was a colonial symbol in Hong Kong.
36. Mr Henry Ho considered that the West Wing was a typical building designated for government use in the 1950s. Noting the difference on heritage value of the three buildings, he supported giving individual grade for each building.

37. Ms Susanna Chiu supported following the holistic approach adopted in grading Queen's Pier in the assessment of CGO. She expressed concerns over the conversion of the West Wing into a privately owned office tower.

38. Dr Anissa Chan agreed to grade the CGO as a whole. In view of the recent public aspirations on the issue, she supported an early assessment.

39. As regards the cultural landscape aspect, Dr Lee Ho-yin and Prof Tracey Lu suggested Members to refer to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) documents for reference.

40. Mr Conrad Wong and Mr Laurence Li said that they respected the Expert Panel and said that it should be up to the Expert Panel to decide whether individual grading should be given to each building of CGO.

41. The Chairman concluded that the grading assessment for the CGO should be handled with priority. The Expert Panel would be requested to grade the three buildings of CGO at the same time but it would be up to them to advise whether individual grading should be given for each single building of CGO.

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

Antiquities and Monuments Office
Leisure and Cultural Services Department
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