

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

FORMER POLICE MARRIED QUARTERS SITE AT HOLLYWOOD ROAD

PURPOSE

To inform Members of the investigation result of the remaining relics from the former Central School/Victoria College.

BACKGROUND

2. At the last Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB) meeting of 29 November 2005, a document entitled “荷李活道警察宿舍前中央書院遺跡” prepared by the Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO) was tabled for Members’ information and discussion in response to the recent public concern over the redevelopment proposal of the former Police Married Quarters site at Hollywood Road. Members were advised of the following:

- (a) Dr. Sun Yat-sen was educated at the Gough Street premises of the Central School from 1884 to 1886. By the time the Central School moved from Gough Street to Hollywood Road in 1889, Dr. Sun had already left.
- (b) The school building of the former Central School (renamed as Victoria College in 1889) at Hollywood Road was demolished in 1951. Only the retaining walls are still in existence. It is the AMO’s view that the heritage value of the remaining walls is not so significant as to warrant preservation under the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance.
- (c) In response to the community’ call for preserving the old stone walls and trees along the Hollywood Road and Shing Wong Street, the AMO has been actively in liaison with Lands D to explore preservation options. An appropriate clause for stone wall preservation would be incorporated into the Special Conditions for land sale.
- (d) At its meeting of 5 July 2005, the AAB was in support of AMO’s assessment of the heritage value of the stone walls as well as the proposal of preserving the stone walls along Shing Wong Street and Hollywood Road only.

3. After deliberation, Members requested that more information on the history of the Central School; the feasibility of restoring the original boundary walls fronting Staunton Street and Aberdeen Street; and the proposed provision of community facilities required under the Special Conditions of the Land Sale should be provided by

the AMO at the next meeting.

CENTRAL SCHOOL AND THE SITE

4. The Central School was the first government school providing upper primary and secondary education to the public. The original school campus was established at Gough Street in 1862. It was later relocated to the site at Hollywood Road in 1889, followed by another removal in 1950 to the present site in Causeway Bay. Initially named Central School, it was renamed Victoria College in 1889 and Queen's College in 1894.

5. The establishment of the Central School marked a new phase in the development of public education in Hong Kong, and was significant in the way that due attention and emphasis was given on English education. The Central School is also noteworthy for the training of prominent figures who emerged as Hong Kong community leaders, and many others held high posts in commercial firms and China's administration. A brief historical account of the Central School is attached at **Annex A** for Members' information.

6. The school building at Hollywood Road site was severely damaged during the Second World War and completely demolished in 1948 to make way for the construction of two blocks of police married quarters, which were opened in 1951. However, some of the original architectural features of the old school campus still remain including two flights of steps and the retaining walls surrounding the site.

REDEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

7. In 1998, the site was rezoned from "Government, Institution or Community" ("G/IC") to "Residential (Group A)" ("R(A)") on the Sai Ying Pun and Sheung Wan Outline Zoning Plan (OZP) No. S/H3/11. At its meeting of 25 November 2005, the Metro Planning Committee of the Town Planning Board (TPB) decided not to agree to an application for amendment to the approved Sai Ying Pun & Sheung Wan OZP No. S/H/3/20 to rezone the site from "R(A)" to "G/IC" for cultural and historical uses. The present zoning of the site remains "R(A)". However, the TPB requested that a planning brief for the site should be prepared by the Planning Department to address the applicants' concern on, inter alia, the need to preserve the cultural heritage and historical features of the site.

PROPOSED LAND SALE CONDITIONS

8. Under the proposed land sale conditions, the purchaser is required to preserve the existing stone wall along Shing Wong Street and a large portion of the wall along Hollywood Road together with the trees growing on them. To meet the shortfall of local open space in the surrounding area, the purchaser is also required to provide a public open space of 1,000m².

9. Furthermore, GIC facilities comprising a Refuse Collection Point (RCP) at the corner of Staunton Street and Shing Wong Street, and a Residential Care Home for

the Elderly (RCHE) will be provided as part of the future development on the Site. The purchaser is also required to construct the portions of future public roads shown coloured green on the attached plan at **Annex B**.

10. Vehicular ingress/egress of the future residential development will be via Hollywood Road with an additional vehicular egress at Aberdeen Street. The vehicular ingress and egress of the RCP will be from Staunton Street, while a vehicular access serving the RCHE exclusively may be provided at Staunton Street.

INITIAL SURVEY ON THE SITE

11. To identify all remaining relics from the former Central School/Victoria College, the AMO conducted an initial survey of the site on 14 December 2005. It was found that the site is bounded by different types of retaining walls and boundary walls constructed in different stages in its construction history. A preliminary appraisal of these historic structures is attached at **Annex C** for Members' information.

12. In order to study the feasibility of restoring the original boundary walls fronting Staunton Street and Aberdeen Street, a preliminary investigation was undertaken at various positions of the existing walls to determine their construction materials and methods. Small portions of the cement rendering were chipped off from the existing walls with hand tools. Members may wish to note that only brickworks were revealed under the 10-15mm thick cement rendering, but not balustrades or pierced panels. Some photographs of the preliminary investigation are at **Annex D** for Members' information.

13. Further to the result of the preliminary investigation, a detailed investigation was undertaken on 5 January 2006 to obtain complete samples by a concrete coring machine. Core hole positions were strategically set out on sections of walls that could be identified on the historical photographs dated 1897 and 1903 respectively. A core size of less than 50mm was chosen to provide a significant sample while at the same time reducing any non-reversible damages to the walls. Result of the detailed investigation is at **Annex E** for Members' reference.

14. According to the historical photographs dated 1897 and 1903, there were pierced panels/balustrades on upper portions of the boundary walls fronting Staunton Street and Aberdeen Street. However, it is revealed from the cored materials that only brickworks are in existence. Among the coring samples the materials of the small panel walls at Staunton Street Entrance are grey bricks and contemporary ceramic tiles, which indicate a different construction period as compared with the other sections of walls comprised of red bricks.

COMMUNITY CONCERN

15. The Central and Western District Council (C&WDC) at its meetings of 24 March 2005 and 19 May 2005 respectively discussed the proposed land sale of the site. Members requested the Government to preserve all the existing trees and the two retaining walls within the site. At a subsequent meeting of the Culture, Leisure and Social Affairs Committee of the C&WDC on 15 December 2005, Members voiced a

strong sentiment to preserving the heritage relics of the former Victoria College in view of its historical significance. A member even proposed to reconstruct the former Victoria College on site. On 23 December 2005, the Chairman of C&W DC wrote to the Chief Executive urging the rezoning of the site to “G/IC”, excluding the site from the land sale, and preserving all existing historic structures within the site. Representations from the Mid-Levels Concern Group (the Group), a group of local residents advocating for the protection of local cultural heritage, were submitted to relevant bureaux and Government departments including the AMO on 19 December 2005. The Group requested the Government to develop the site into an Heritage Park so as to retain all existing relics and to provide the much-needed open space in the area.

16. In view of the important role of the former Central School in public education in Hong Kong, the Old Boys Association of Queen’s College and the Conservancy Association have also raised their concern over the issue. They requested that structures of historical interest within the site should be properly preserved.

Antiquities and Monuments Office
Leisure and Cultural Services Department
January 2006

Ref.: LCS AM 22/3
LCS AM 51/3/10