MEMORANDUM FOR MEMBERS OF THE
ANTIQUITIES ADVISORY BOARD

HONG KONG TRADITIONAL CHINESE ARCHITECTURAL
INFORMATION SYSTEM

PURPOSE

To inform Members of the progress of the design and development of the Traditional Architectural Information System (TAIS), an electronic database archive of traditional Chinese architecture in Hong Kong.

BACKGROUND

2.   The Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO) is dedicated to provide heritage information to the public for research and education. To encourage easier and wider public access to its database and archival holdings, the AMO has established information system projects, making use of electronic access. A Geographical Information System on Hong Kong Heritage (GISH) was developed by the Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO) between late 2003 and early 2005. Information relating to historic buildings and archaeological sites in the forms of texts, geographical maps and photographs are presented on web-based application. Records of the 62 declared historic buildings/structures and the 17 declared archaeological sites are released to the public via the internet since late October 2005.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

3.   Between 2003 and 2004, the AMO commissioned a research project on Hong Kong's traditional Chinese buildings.   This research project aimed at studying in great depth the form and architectural features of significant traditional Chinese architecture and representative villages in Hong Kong.   The output was a publication and an electronic archival system for traditional Chinese buildings and villages in Hong Kong.

4.   The vernacular buildings covered in this project include temples, ancestral halls, study halls, houses, shrines and village walls.   The project has used the collected materials to feature and analyze the village and building attributes.   These attributes include the layout of village and buildings, photos, *fengshui* landscape, history of village and buildings, architectural features and design of buildings, measured drawings of buildings, and associated traditional rituals and festivals.   For architectural features, each building would be studied and analyzed by individual elements including

entrances, roofs, structures, platforms, walls, gable walls, decorations, doors, windows and so on. A table listing the attributes of building and village to be presented in the system is at the **Annex**.

5.   One of the outcomes of the project is a database archive which can store the information of about 52 villages in the New Territories and architectural information and history of approximately 152 traditional Chinese buildings in the territory.   Apart from acting as an archival collection, the database also provides searching functions that enable the users to select specific buildings and villages for their own studies.   The programme also supports simple comparison on different architectural elements among the recorded buildings.

PRESENT POSITION

6.   As the database system developed could only be accessed via workstations installed in the AMO, it is considered more desirable to convert the system into the web-based application which could be more widely accessible by specialist, educational and popular audiences for heritage research, promotion and education.

7.   With the assistance of the Information Technology Division of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, a service provider has been engaged in late 2005 to carry out the following tasks:
   (a)   System analysis and design – to investigate and design the required functions, system and software architecture and data structure;
   (b)   System implementation and integration – to conduct physical system design and to develop data conversion programmes; and
   (c)   System maintenance and support- to provide system support and skill transfer for the first three months after system implementation.

8.   The finished product will be a web-based programme which can be accessed by the public online.   It is scheduled that the system could be launched by early 2007.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROJECT

9.   The purpose of the project is to promote the public's appreciation and enjoyment of Hong Kong's built heritage.   At a time when heritage tourism is being vigorously promoted and the education of students is increasingly focused on Hong Kong's history and culture, this project will provide important sources of information to help people to understand our past.   The database system will be a tool containing details of traditional built heritage and villages which can be used as educational and research materials for academics, the general public, heritage tourists, and students of Hong Kong's tradition and history.

10.   There are many areas in the study of Hong Kong's vernacular architecture, but the development of an architectural electronic archival system in the field of traditional Chinese architecture have never been done elsewhere before.   The project

has conducted a systematic research on Hong Kong's representative vernacular architecture and villages.   It has resulted in increasing the knowledge and appreciation of local tradition and history.   Upon completion of the project, efforts would be made to explore further collaborations with academic or research institutes on whether the system could be extended to cover Western colonial buildings.

Antiquities and Monuments Office
Leisure and Cultural Services Department
                March 2006

Ref :   LCS AM 22/3
          LCS AM 33/3