

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

**REVITALIZATION OF THE ORIGINAL SITE OF
THE CENTRAL SCHOOL ON HOLLYWOOD ROAD**

PURPOSE

This paper aims to inform Members of the historical background of and to seek Members' views on the revitalization of the original site of the Central School (中央書院) on Hollywood Road (the Site).

BACKGROUND

2. The Site, measured about 6,000 sq. metres (m²), is bounded by Hollywood Road to the northeast, Staunton Street to the southwest, Aberdeen Street to the southeast and Shing Wong Street to the northwest. It is currently zoned as "Residential (A)" ("R(A)") on the Sai Ying Pun and Sheung Wan Outline Zoning Plan. The Site contains three main platforms descending from Staunton Street to Hollywood Road with two vacant blocks of the former police married quarters — Upper Block (near Staunton Street) and Lower Block (in middle of the Site) on the central platform. There is also a block formerly used as the Junior Police Call Club House on the lower platform (JPC Building hereafter) (a location plan and an aerial view at Annex A).

3. The Site was included in the List of Sites for Sale by Application in March 2005. As one of the heritage conservation initiatives in support of the new policy, the Chief Executive announced in his 2007 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 on its revitalization. A site layout plan with a cross-sectional view is at Annex B for Members' reference.

4. The Administration briefed the Legislative Council on 22 February 2008 on the background of the former Central School site and undertook to conduct a three-month public engagement exercise (i.e. from late February to late May 2008) to collect views of the public on how best the Site could be revitalized.

Historical Background of the Site

5. The Central School has a history of over a century (photo 1 at Annex C). It started operation at Gough Street in 1862. It was the first Government school providing upper primary and secondary education to the public. Its opening marked a

new phase in the development of public education in Hong Kong. In the early years, education on Hong Kong Island was provided in a few small schools run by local Chinese with subsidy from Government. Public education was provided by missionary schools which received practically no financial support from Government. The establishment of the Central School heralded the Government's intention to reform education on a secular basis and to establish its own school.

6. In 1889, the Central School was relocated from Gough Street to the Site and was renamed as Victoria College. In 1894, the school was renamed as Queen's College (皇仁書院). During the Second World War, the school buildings were severely damaged and were demolished in 1948 to make way for the development of the Police Married Quarters that still remain within the Site. The Queen's College was reopened at a temporary site on Kennedy Road in 1947 and moved to its present site on Causeway Road in 1950.

7. The Central School is noteworthy for the education of outstanding personalities who served Hong Kong and Mainland China with their bilingual abilities and cross-cultural experiences. Among its graduates, many emerged as community leaders including those who held high positions in commercial firms and the administration of Mainland China. Exemplary old boys of the Central School who became important figures in the history of Mainland China and Hong Kong included the Hon Ho Fook (何福, 1863-1926), Sir Ho Kai (何啓, 1859-1914), Mr Ho Kom Tong (何甘棠, 1866-1950), Sir Robert Ho Tung (何東, 1862-1956), the Hon Lau Chu-pak (劉鑄伯, 1867-1922) and, last but not least, Dr Sun Yat-sen (孫逸仙, 1866-1925) who, after receiving an earlier education in Hawaii, gained admission to the Central School in 1884 at the age of 18 and left in 1886. Although the Central School was moved from Gough Street to Hollywood Road after Dr Sun had left the School, the association of Dr Sun and those exemplary social figures with the School is a valuable memory for Hong Kong.

8. In the early days, the Hong Kong Police Force provided quarters for Western and Indian officers only. After the Second World War, the Police Force started providing married rank and file officers (now known as "Junior Police Officers"), including Chinese, with quarters in order to enhance the morale of the Force. The first of these police quarters was the Hollywood Road Police Married Quarters.

9. Architecturally, the Quarters are of functional design reflecting the architecture of the modern movement. They are of slab blocks design with residential units on each floor sharing a common corridor and communal toilets and baths. The design of the two buildings is a direct fulfillment of functional requirements, with the construction and materials clearly reflecting the architecture of their age. Structurally, the Quarters are primarily of load bearing wall construction, i.e. few columns or beams in the buildings. Buildings of such sort are not easily seen nowadays because many of them have been demolished over the years.

INVESTIGATION FINDINGS

10. The Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO) has conducted a number of investigations at the Site. In December 2005, AMO conducted an initial appraisal of the structures within the Site and found it bounded by different types of retaining walls and boundary walls constructed in different periods. A preliminary investigation was carried out at various positions of the existing walls along Staunton Street and Aberdeen Street to determine their construction materials and methods. AMO identified remnants of the Central School within and around the Site, including granite shafts and plinths of the boundary walls, the retaining walls as well as the quoin stones at the corners of these retaining walls, flights of steps linking different platforms, etc. AMO undertook further investigation in January 2006. More recently, AMO carried out an archaeological investigation in July 2007 and conducted subsurface investigation covering an area of about 600 m².

Heritage Value of the Site

11. The site investigations confirm that the following have been reasonably preserved:

- _____ (a) the existing retaining walls together with the unique trees along Hollywood Road and Shing Wong Street (photos 2 and 3 at **Annex C**), and at the lower platform of the Site;
- _____ (b) the granite steps (stairs) leading to the lower platform together with the remaining rubble wall (photos 4 and 5 at **Annex C**); and
- _____ (c) the original granite plinths and pillars of the fenced walls along Staunton Street and Aberdeen Street (photo 6 at **Annex C**).

However, other than the above, the foundations and other features of the Central School have been significantly disturbed by works in the past. Based on the findings of the site investigations, the chance of finding better-preserved parts within the Site through a further site investigation is slim. Taking into account the risk to the tree walls and the stability of underground features, further site excavation work is not justified.

12. AMO is of the view that the heritage value of those remains of the school foundation uncovered can be assessed in terms of their authenticity and integrity. The alignment of the granite blocks of the foundation walls are basically in line with that in the layout plan of 1883, and generally reveals the configuration of the school foundation. These structures now below ground, together with other historic structures above ground, constitute an integral historical setting of the Site that could help illustrate the history of the Central School. However, as the foundations have been considerably disturbed and, as a result, their value for aesthetic appreciation and academic research has been reduced, their overall heritage value has also diminished to such a degree that total in-situ preservation cannot be justified.

13. AMO considers that the remaining structures within and around the Site

carried certain heritage value in association with the former Central School. Any revitalization proposals should therefore be based on the premise that the remaining features of the Central School will be preserved and will have due regard to the historical significance of the Central School to the development of Hong Kong.

14. The above assessments and recommendations of AMO have been deliberated by the Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB). The Board has discussed the historical importance of the Site a number of times since 2005. AAB considered that heritage preservation requirements should be imposed on the redevelopment of the Site. AAB recommended that the remaining features of the Central School as outlined in paragraph 10(a) to (c) above should be preserved, while some alterations should be allowed to strike a balance between heritage preservation and the future use of the Site. The prospective developer should be requested to submit a conservation plan for the preservation and maintenance of the historic features at the Site to the satisfaction of AMO. The requirements were incorporated by Planning Department into the Planning Brief for the Site that was endorsed by the Metro Planning Committee (MPC) of the Town Planning Board (TPB) in February 2007.

Historical Value of the Area

15. Although the Site was not the original location of the Central School where Dr Sun Yat-sen had attended from 1884 to 1886, it is centrally located in an area where Dr Sun pursued his education and planned his revolutionary activities between 1883 and 1895. Apart from having the Dr Sun Yat-sen Museum located in the same district, a Dr Sun Yat-sen Historical Trail (**Annex D**) linking 15 spots with Dr Sun's historical traces in Hong Kong has also been established. Those historical locations along the Trail include, inter alia –

- (a) the original site of American Congregational Mission Preaching House (公理會佈道所) - Dr. Sun was baptized here with the name "Yat-sen" in June 1883;
- (b) the first location of Central School at Gough Street;
- (c) the original site of Yang Yao Ji (楊耀記) – the place where Dr. Sun, Chen Shaobai (陳少白), Yao Lie (尤列) and Yang Heling (楊鶴齡), collectively called "the Four Desperados" (「四大寇」), always held meetings to discuss plans against the Qing Government;
- (d) the original site of Chinese Patriotic Mutual Improvement Society (輔仁文社);
- (e) the original site of Alice Memorial Hospital and College of Medicine for Chinese, Hongkong (雅麗氏醫院及附設香港西醫書院) – Dr. Sun was transferred from Boji Hospital in Guangzhou to the College for medical training and he graduated with distinction in 1892;
- (f) the original site of To Tsai Church (道濟會堂) – a Christian church where Dr. Sun always went for religious gatherings when he studied in the Hong Kong College of Medicine; and
- (g) the original site of Xing Zhong Hui (香港興中會) – a revolutionary organization against the Qing Government.

16. The revitalization of the Site could capitalize on the cultural resources of the area to help enhance the public's understanding of the life of Dr Sun in Hong Kong as a complement to the Dr Sun Yat Sen Museum located in the former Kom Tong Hall.

VIEWS OF CENTRAL AND WESTERN DISTRICT COUNCIL

17. Over the years, various views have been expressed on the future use of the Site, including reduction of development density, provision of open space and/or community facilities, etc. Between March 2005 and September 2007, the Central and Western District Council (C&WDC) and its Committees, at their meetings, discussed a number of times the then proposed land sale and preservation of the Site.¹ In those discussions, members requested the Government to preserve all the existing trees and the two retaining walls within the Site. They also urged AMO to publicize site investigation reports before consulting members of the public on the way forward for the Site. Some members also requested that the Site be used as open space and be rezoned as "Government, Institution or Community" ("G/IC") in the future. In July 2005, C&WDC passed six motions related to the development of the Hollywood Road Site requesting:

- (a) Government to preserve all old trees and stone walls within the Site and declare them as monument;
- (b) the future developer to set up a fund for preservation of those trees and stone walls;
- (c) the future developer to build and maintain an escalator between Hollywood Road and Staunton Street;
- (d) Government to reduce the density and building height of future development;
- (e) LCSD to maintain the future Open Space; and
- (f) Government to provide swimming pool, community hall, public library, indoor recreation centre, etc. on this Site (or the Central Market site).

18. We briefed the C&WDC on the historical background of and consulted Members' views on the revitalization of the Site on 2 April 2008. At the meeting, C&WDC passed the following three motions (English translation) related to the development of the Hollywood Road Site:

- (a) In revitalizing the Site, C&WDC urges the Government to take a holistic planning approach in linking the Site with related heritage spots in the

¹ The C&WDC discussed the subject at its meetings on 24 March 2005, 19 May 2005, 6 October 2005 and 11 January 2007. The C&WDC Culture, Leisure and Social Affairs Committee (CLSAC) discussed the subject at its meeting on 15 December 2005. The C&WDC Food, Environment, Hygiene, and Works Committee (FEHWC) discussed the subject at its meetings on 13 December 2006, 5 July and 13 September 2007.

vicinity so as to preserve this historic old city area and turn it into a historic and cultural attraction² (*translated version*);

- (b) C&WDC supports the Government to rezone the current R(A) site as “Other Uses” (“OU”) for cultural, historic and greening uses so as to preserve and revitalize the Site³ (*translated version*); and
- (c) C&WDC urges the Government to strike a balance between heritage conservation and economic development when implementing any revitalization/reconstruction plans for the Site; to strive to preserve the original ambience/atmosphere of the Site; and to open the Site to public upon completion so as to achieve heritage conservation/revitalization, development of open space, better utilization of community resources, and promotion of heritage tourism, etc.⁴ (*translated version*).

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT EXERCISE

19. After the Chief Executive’s announcement to remove the Site from the List of Sites for Sale by Application in October 2007, the Administration reported to AAB in November 2007 on the findings of AMO’s site investigation. The study confirmed the heritage value of the remaining structures within and around the Site and advised that due regard should be given to the historical significance of the Central School in any revitalization plan. The Administration then undertook a further study on the Site, in particular its relationship with the neighbourhood. We have considered the overall site potentials and planning parameters, revisited previous DC’s views, reviewed the need for open space and G/IC facilities, etc. We propose that, in revitalizing the Site, due regard should be given to the following general principles:

- (a) preserve the historical relics of the Site which include the existing retaining walls, unique trees, granite steps and original granite plinths and pillars of the fenced walls within and around the Site;
- (b) manifest the heritage and historical values as well as the original ambience/atmosphere of the Site;
- (c) revitalize the Site by giving it a new lease of life that may become a landmark with characteristics and vitality for local residents and visitors;

²Motion 1 (Original Chinese version): 中西區區議會要求政府保育活化中央書院遺址，必須與周圍歷史相關古蹟共同計劃，以保存歷史舊城區，成為本地歷史文化的重點。

³Motion 2: 中西區區議會支持荷李活道前已婚警察宿舍由「住宅(甲類)」地帶劃為「其他指定用途」地帶，作文化、歷史及綠化等用途，以能保育活化該地帶的發展。

⁴Motion 3: 本會要求政府在落實中央書院遺址活化及重建方案時，必須考慮平衡保育與經濟發展的因素，盡量保留原址風貌，同時全面開放予公眾參觀，以達致保育與活化古蹟、發展休憩用地、善用社區資源，以及推廣文物旅遊等目的。

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- (d) contribute to the holistic planning for the area along and around Hollywood Road under the proposed approach for heritage conservation of “spot (點)”, “line (線)” and “area (面)”. This is to create synergy between the Site and other heritage spots in its vicinity such as Man Mo Temple, the Central Police Station Compound, Kom Tong Hall, etc. Furthermore, opportunity should be taken to promote heritage tourism in view of its proximity to popular tourist spots like Lan Kwai Fong, SOHO, etc. (map of Greater Circle at **Annex E**);
 - (e) respond to the community’s concerns about development intensity, building height, etc. generated under the previous residential development scheme; and
 - (f) address the community’s aspirations for more local open space and G/IC facilities.

Given that the Site is rather large (about 6,000 m²), we believe there are good prospects of accommodating various community’s aspirations. The Administration welcomes proposals from the community on how best the Site should be revitalized and will make every effort to well use this precious land resource in order to meet the balanced needs of society.

20. To facilitate the public to give views on the future use of the Site during the public engagement exercise, we shall provide basic information about the Site such as historical background, basic development considerations and information on the physical aspects of the Site itself. For instance, we will highlight the following for consideration:

- (a) As mentioned above, the Site has two quarters blocks, Upper Block and Lower Block, and the JPC Building on the lower platform near to the stairs;
- (b) As the JPC Building is located near the stairs (which is a historical relic) on the lower platform and has an area of about 400 m², it may be a good choice to be retained and refurbished for meaningful purposes, e.g. as an exhibition gallery on the history of the Central School, the life of Dr Sun Yat-sen in Hong Kong and/or the early development of education in Hong Kong; and
- (c) As regard the treatment of the two Quarters Blocks, the options of :
 - (i) retaining both Upper and Lower Blocks – however there will be little space or development potentials;
 - (ii) demolishing both Upper and Lower Blocks – the whole Site will be available for comprehensive planning and design and there will be a lot of space for meeting various aspirations; and
 - (iii) demolishing one block and retaining the other – this is a midway

option such that while one quarter block is available for revitalization purpose, the Site will still have reasonable space for meeting various requirements. If we decide to demolish one block, it will be better to demolish the Lower Block because it is in the middle of the Site and, with its demolition, there will be more flexibility from the design angle.

21. We embarked upon a three-month public engagement exercise in late February 2008 to allow the public to express views on the future use of the Site. The exercise includes the following main components:

- (a) Open Days of the Site on 28 and 29, March 2008 for interested parties, the media and the public. During the two-day event, a total of 3,500 people visited the Site. Guided tours were also organized for the media, C&WDC and the tourism sector;
- (b) Consultation with parties concerned including C&WDC on 2 April, the Travel Industry Council on 8 April, the Tourism Strategy Group in late April, etc.; and
- (c) Public seminar for gauging views from professional institutes, interested parties and the general public on 26 April 2008.

22. Owing to the important role of AAB in heritage conservation, we are now consulting the Board on how best the Site should be revitalized. Upon completion of the public engagement exercise in late May 2008, the Administration will carry out a detailed assessment and report the outcome to the Legislative Council. We shall also seek the Town Planning Board's agreement should zoning amendment for the Site be necessary.

ADVICE SOUGHT

23. Members are invited to comment on the above and, in particular, give views on how best the Site should be revitalized.

Development Bureau
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