

Views Expressed by Members and Government's response

(A) Whether the Ordinance should be reviewed

In the context of the formulation of the Heritage Conservation Policy announced in October 2007, Government had critically considered the desirability for various options including embarking upon legislative changes to further enhance the protection of historic buildings. It was then decided not to pursue these options on the grounds that revamping of the Ordinance or introducing a new heritage conservation ordinance would be a major and protracted exercise. It would not be conducive to producing early success in heritage conservation work. Hence, a package of action-oriented initiatives on heritage conservation was introduced.

2. The reasons set out in the previous paragraph remain valid today. Nonetheless, in the context of the current review on the relationship between the Monument Declaration System under the Ordinance and the Grading System of AAB, we have considered whether and how we can actively make use of the existing Ordinance to formulate a better framework that can provide certain level of protection to the highly graded historic buildings. Under our proposal, Grade I historic buildings will be accepted as a “pool” of more highly valuable heritage buildings for consideration by the Antiquities Authority as to whether some of these may have reached the “high threshold” of monuments. When any of the Grade I buildings are under threat of demolition, the Antiquities Authority will readily invoke the relevant provisions in the Ordinance to declare them as “proposed monuments”, so as to give these highly graded buildings immediate protection and allow time for AMO to complete its assessment and for the Antiquities Authority to come to a view on whether to proceed with monument declaration. The creation of the link between grading and monument declaration as above has in effect made use of the Ordinance to provide better protection to highly graded historic buildings.

(B) Whether collective memory should be included as one of the assessment criteria for according gradings to historic buildings

3. According to the Assessment Criteria for Grading of Historic Buildings (as set out at **Appendix** to this Annex), six criteria (namely “historic interest”, “architectural merit”, “group value”, “social value and local interest”, “authenticity” and “rarity”) will be considered. Under the description of “social value and local interest”, collective memory has already been specifically mentioned as a criterion –

- “4.1 Significance as a symbolic or visual landmark recognized by the community for symbolic, spiritual, emotional or nostalgic reasons.
- 4.2 Importance in depicting the “cultural identity” and perpetuating the “collective memory” of the community.
- 4.3 The collective memory to be directly or tangibly associated with events

or living traditions and customs, with ideas, or with beliefs.”

4. The current review focuses on the relationship between the Monument Declaration System and the Grading System, and has not suggested any change to the assessment criteria. Nonetheless, we are open-minded for comments and suggestions from Members on whether and how the assessment criteria can be refined to reflect the changing circumstances and aspiration of the community as appropriate.

(C) Whether the Antiquities Authority could commit that each of the Grade I buildings would be considered for monument declaration and the process would be carried out in a transparent manner

5. Under the proposal, the Antiquities Authority commits that all buildings granted Grade I status by AAB would be actively considered for monument declaration. In this connection, the Authority will take into account the following factors in prioritising the Grade I buildings for consideration –

- (a) heritage value/significance of the building as revealed in the grading exercise;
- (b) the demolition risks of the building;
- (c) the aspiration of the owners and the public; and
- (d) ownership of the building.

6. AMO will report to AAB on a regular basis the situation of the Grade I buildings being actively explored for possible monument declaration, the progress of its assessment and the discussion with the owner, etc.

(D) Whether Government-owned Grade I buildings should also be declared as monuments

7. It is true that practically it would be easier to declare Government building as monuments. Nonetheless, Government buildings must also reach the high threshold before they can be declared as monuments. Members may be aware that Government has declared the Green Island Lighthouse Compound as a monument by notice in the Gazette on 7 November 2008.

(E) Whether regular review would be carried out on the gradings accorded to buildings

8. We concur with the need for regular reviews to take into account the changing circumstances. As a start, we suggest that AAB should aim to carry out an overall review of the gradings every ten years subject to availability of resources and prevailing circumstances.

(F) Whether clear guidelines could be provided to owners on what could and what could not be demolished for each level/type of graded buildings

9. We recognise that if such form of standard guidelines could be produced, it could facilitate the owners and their architects in considering whether and how to preserve and revitalise their historic buildings. However, given the wide diversity in the type of buildings and the architectural features in them, it would be difficult to provide “one-size-fits-all” guidelines that can cover all circumstances. If different guidelines are produced for different types of buildings (e.g. shophouses, ancestral halls, churches, temples, lighthouses, etc.), this would be very time-consuming and require substantial resources. We will examine to see how to strike a balance.