

Board Minutes
AAB/3/2013-14

ANTIQUITIES ADVISORY BOARD

Minutes of the 163rd Meeting
on Thursday, 27 June 2013 at 3:00 p.m.
in Conference Room, Hong Kong Heritage Discovery Centre
Kowloon Park, Haiphong Road, Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon

Present: Mr Andrew Lam Siu-lo, JP (Chairman)
Mr Chan Ka-kui, BBS, JP
Prof Rebecca Chiu Lai-har, JP
Prof Ho Puay-peng, JP
Prof Ho Pui-yin
Mr Tim Ko Tim-keung
Mr Tony Lam Chung-wai
Ms Lilian Law Suk-kwan, JP
Mr Philip Liao Yi-kang
Mr Kenny Lin Ching-pui
Prof Tracey Lu Lie-dan
Ms Janet Pau Heng-ting
Ms Yvonne Shing Mo-han
Dr Winnie Tang Shuk-ming, JP
Ms Karen Tang Shuk-tak
Ms Ava Tse Suk-ying, SBS
Sr Wong Bay

Mr Asa Lee (Secretary)
Senior Executive Officer (Antiquities and Monuments)
Leisure and Cultural Services Department

Absent with Apologies: Mr Stephen Chan Chit-kwai, BBS, JP
Prof Chung Po-yin
Mr Joseph Luc Ngai
Prof Billy So Kee-long
Dr Joseph Ting Sun-pao
Mr Conrad Wong Tin-cheung, JP

In Attendance:

Development Bureau

Ms Grace Lui, JP

Deputy Secretary (Works)1

Miss Vivian Ko

Commissioner for Heritage

Leisure and Cultural Services Department

Ms Cynthia Liu

Deputy Director (Culture)

Dr Louis Ng

Assistant Director (Heritage and Museums)

Mr Tom Ming

Executive Secretary (Antiquities and Monuments)

Dr Alan Fung

Assistant Curator I (Buildings Survey)

(for item 4 only)

Planning Department

Miss Fiona Lung

Acting Assistant Director/Metro

Architectural Services Department

Mr Fong Siu-wai

Assistant Director (Property Services)

Mr Lam Sair-ling

Senior Maintenance Surveyor/Heritage

**Item 3 Heritage Impact Assessment (“HIA”) on Duddell Street Steps and Gas Lamps
(Board Paper AAB/12/2013-14)**

9. The Chairman introduced the presentation team that consisted of the following members:

Mr Albert Lam
Engineer, Highways Department

Mr Eddie Chan
Project Manager, Ove Arup & Partners HK Ltd.

Mr Eric Chan
Geotechnical Engineer, Ove Arup & Partners HK Ltd.

Mr Keith Renn
Geotechnical Engineer, Ove Arup & Partners HK Ltd.

10. Mr Eddie Chan briefed Members that the Highways Department had proposed upgrading / improvement (U/I) works to the retaining wall (Feature No. 11SW-B/R93 (Sub-division 1)) adjacent to the Duddell Street Steps and Gas Lamps, a declared monument, in order to enhance the stability of the retaining wall which was not meeting the current geotechnical standard. He briefed Members on the cultural significance and the character-defining elements of the declared monument, the proposed U/I works and four design options for the proposed works. He then explained in detail Option 2, the recommended option, regarding the potential adverse impact on the declared monument and the corresponding mitigation measures to be introduced.

11. Mr Philip Liao indicated that he was involved in a redevelopment project within the Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui Compound. In response to Mr Philip Liao’s enquiry on the disused tunnels, Mr Tom Ming referred to the consultancy report “Historical and Architectural Appraisal of the Central Government Offices” that there was a network of old air raid tunnels underneath the Former Central Government Offices. Though many of the tunnels had been backfilled after the Second World War, a few of the entrances (known as “portals”) including the one at Duddell Street still existed. Noting the historic background of the disused tunnels, Mr Philip Liao commented that should backfilling of the tunnels be necessary, reversible methods should be employed.

12. Sr Wong Bay considered Options 1, 3 and 4 not preferred. In respect of Option 2, he was worried that the skin wall would induce adverse impact to the roots of the existing wall trees. He considered the proposed masonry facing covering the skin wall incompatible with the existing retaining wall.

13. Prof Ho Puay-peng also expressed concern over the type of the masonry used for covering the skin wall.

14. Mr Tim Ko believed that the disused tunnels were air raid tunnels constructed before the Second World War, which were of high heritage significance but were neglected by the society. He worried that the proposed works would affect the conditions and the setting of the tunnels as well as the portal at Duddell Street. Mr Tony Lam added that suitable measures should be introduced to prevent the tree roots from blocking the portal.

15. In response to Prof Ho Puay-peng's question on monument boundary, Mr Tom Ming explained that the retaining wall adjacent to the Duddell Street Stone Steps and Gas Lamps is outside the monument boundary. However, the AMO considered an HIA for the proposed U/I works necessary in view of the possible visual impact of the proposed works on the declared monument and interference such as vibration caused during the course of works.

16. To address the above concerns from Members regarding Option 2, Mr Eddie Chan explained that :

- (i) a 300mm gap filled with aggregates had been reserved to allow sufficient air circulation and prevent suffocating of the tree roots. This method, as recommended by their in-house landscape architect and arborist, had also been adopted at the case of Béthanie;
- (ii) compatibility of the proposed masonry facing and the existing retaining wall would be given due consideration;
- (iii) reversible method would be employed for backfilling the disused tunnels.

17. Mr Kenny Lin doubted how serious the traffic condition of Ice House Street would be affected if Option 3, which would induce the least impact on the declared monument, was adopted. Mr Eddie Chan elaborated that a large works area had to be reserved for accommodating the required machinery, and so according to the computer modeling results, the traffic condition on Ice House Street would be seriously affected during the course of works. Mr Eddie Chan also pointed out that the works would affect the existing utilities and cause significant vibrations to the retaining walls.

18. Mr Kenny Lin and Dr Winnie Tang stressed their concerns over the adverse impact caused by Option 2 to the roots of the existing wall trees. Dr Winnie Tang further suggested that independent tree experts be consulted on the proposed design. Noting that the tree condition would be monitored by a certified arborist and tree reports would be prepared every 2 months, she advised the arborist to conduct inspection more frequently and to draw up contingency measures in case the health of the trees deteriorated. Ms Lilian Law expressed her reservations about the installation of soil nails as proposed in Options 2 and 4 which might cause significant disturbance/damage to the tree roots. Mr Chan Ka-kui suggested confining the skin wall surface area to the soil nail heads only.

19. Mr Eddie Chan supplemented that the Landscape Unit of the Highways Department had been consulted and they raised no objection to the proposed design. Ms Grace Lui added that the Greening, Landscape and Tree Management Section of the Development Bureau could give advice on the proposed design and mitigation measures.

20. Mr Chan Ka-kui, Mr Kenny Lin, Prof Ho Puay-peng, Mr Tony Lam, Mr Philip Liao and Sr Wong Bay suggested exploring other methods so that backfill of the disused tunnels and construction of the skin wall could be avoided.

21. Mr Eddie Chan stressed that Option 2 was recommended after consideration of the existing site environment, traffic conditions, construction cost, tree preservation feasibilities, possible impacts on the monument and technicalities.

22. Having considered that the sub-standard retaining wall had no immediate and obvious signs of danger, the Antiquities Advisory Board (“AAB”) agreed that the project team should submit a revised/alternative design taking into account Members’ comments for further consideration.