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From: Katty Law
Date: Thu, 17 Nov 2011 08:38:59 +0800
To: Bernard Chan ; Tom
Ming
Cc:
Subject: URGENT REQUEST FOR PUBLIC HEARING TO DISCUSS THE HERITAGE VALUE & CONSERVATION OF GOVERNMENT HILL & CENTRAL GOVERNMENT OFFICES

Dear Chairman and Secretary of the Antiquities Advisory Board,
Below and attached is a letter to the chairman and all members of the Antiquities Advisory Board regarding the captioned urgent request. Please circulate this letter to all members of the AAB asap.

We look forward to your prompt and positive reply by email and phone to the undersigned. Thank you for your kind attention.

Regards,
Katty Law
Convener, Government Hill Concern Group

PS. Please note that this letter will be sent to local and international media in response to recent heated public discussion on the redevelopment of Government Hill

17 November 2011

To : Chairman and members of the Antiquities Advisory Board

Re: Government Hill and Central Government Offices

URGENT AND FOR IMMEDIATE ATTENTION

Dear Sir/Madam,

In view of the imminent threat to the integrity of the historic Government Hill brought about by a proposal to redevelop the Central Government Offices West Wing and a large surrounding area on and below ground, the Government Hill Concern Group, which comprises 21 local environmental and heritage conservation NGOs (listed below), would like to bring this matter to the urgent and immediate attention of the Antiquities Advisory Board. We strongly request that the Board conduct public deliberations of the heritage value of the the Government Hill cultural landscape with the Central Government Offices as a significant part. This should include public hearing session(s) with opportunities for public presentation.

The Government Hill Concern Group concurs that while the grading/declaration exercise should form part of the deliberation, the recommendation to set up a special protected area to conserve Government Hill, as proposed by the government consultant (Purcell Miller Tritton LLP) should be discussed so as to come up with a more comprehensive and holistic conservation plan for this immensely significant historic area.

The recent declaration of Ho Tung Gardens as a monument highlights the importance in protecting the entirety of a cultural landscape and our Government Hill can without doubt be counted as a significant example. The entire Government Hill must be considered as a whole and CGO West Wing cannot be singled out as a separate entity.

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The AAB had in the past conducted similar public deliberations on the heritage value of the Queen's Pier and the Hollywood Road Police Married Quarters (PMQ), in which some of our members had participated. Such public deliberations had indeed facilitated a proper evaluation of a site's heritage value through the engagement of all concerned stakeholders. Queen's Pier was unfortunately demolished but the PMQ was saved and will become a centre for creative industries. A timely public discussion is needed to avoid irreversible mistakes.

Hong Kong will lose an important heritage precinct, our Government Hill, if this urgent discussion is not carried out as soon as possible, with the greatest possible professionalism and public engagement. We urge that this public hearing be conducted through the platform of the AAB before any rezoning application for this site is to be discussed in the Town Planning Board. Any rezoning of this site should be, and must be, preceded by a proper evaluation of its heritage value and development of a conservation management plan. Inappropriate rezoning can seriously compromise the integrity and heritage value of Government Hill and must be avoided at all cost. Therefore, heritage conservation charters of international best practice must be followed and the highest standard of conservation management observed.

Please include this letter as a formal submission for discussion in the Board meeting next Wednesday (November 23). Our representatives would like to attend this meeting to discuss this request. We look forward to receiving your prompt and positive response.

Best regards,

Katty Law

Convenor, Government Hill Concern Group

The Government Hill Concern Group is an alliance of the following environmental and heritage conservation groups and concerned professionals and members of the public: Central and Western Concern Group, The Professional Commons, Designing Hong Kong, Green Sense, Greeners Action, The Conservancy Association, Heritage Watch, Community Alliance for Urban Planning, Community Development Initiative, Save Our Shorelines, Lung Fu Shan Environment Concern Group, HK Redevelopment Concern Group, Heritage Hong Kong, Clear the Air, Green Environmental Health Group, South Tokwawan Concern Group, Society for Protection of the Harbour, Soho Residents Committee, Mini Spotters, World City Committee, Dragon Garden Charitable Trust

Contact address: