

**Notes of Meeting of Historic Buildings Assessment Panel on the
Post-1950 Former Central Government Offices (CGO),
9:30 am – 11:30 am, on 31 May 2012, at
Conference Room, Hong Kong Heritage Discovery Centre,
Kowloon Park, Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon**

Panel Members:

1. Dr. LAW Kwok-sang
2. Mr. Louis LOR
3. Professor David LUNG
4. Dr. SIU Kwok-kin
5. Mr. Tom MING

1. It was agreed that the purpose of the meeting of the Assessment Panel (the Panel) was to make recommendations to the Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB) on the heritage significance of the Post 1950 Former CGO site and the grading of the three historic buildings within the Site.

2. Assessment of the Post-1950 Former CGO

2.1 The following documents and papers were distributed to members of the Panel prior to the meeting:

- 2.1.1 “Cultural Landscape” in Annex 3 “Guidelines on the inscription of specific types of properties on the World Heritage List” of the “Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention” (World Heritage Committee, UNESCO, 1992)
- 2.1.2 “Xi’an Declaration on the Conservation of the Setting of Heritage Structures, Sites and Areas” (ICOMOS, 2005) (Xi’an Declaration)
- 2.1.3 “Proposals Concerning the Desirability of a Standard-Setting Instrument on Historic Urban Landscape” (UNESCO, 2011)
- 2.1.4 “Historical and Architectural Appraisal of the Central Government Offices” by Purcell Miller Tritton LLP (2009) (the PMT Report)
- 2.1.5 Information materials regarding the Government Hill and CGO provided by the public over the past few months such as the exhibition booklet “The Greatest Form has no Shape – Three Exemplary Works of Hong Kong Modern Architecture”, the “Government Hill Compendium” compiled by the Government

Hill Concern Group, special features by the press and links to related videos.

2.2 The Panel agreed that the six criteria namely historical interest, architectural merit, group value, social value, authenticity and rarity adopted for assessing the 1444 historic buildings should still be employed for this exercise to maintain consistency. They however opined that the environmental value of the Post-1950 Former CGO site should also be taken into account and could be included in the authenticity criterion, i.e. modification to the cultural setting and the associated cultural landscapes.

2.3 The Panel agreed that the assessment exercise should cover four items, namely, (1) the Post-1950 Former CGO site as a whole; (2) the Main Wing; (3) the East Wing; and (4) the West Wing.

2.4 After lengthy deliberation, the following assessment results were generated:

2.4.1 The Post-1950 Former CGO site (Grade 1)

The Panel opined that the Former CGO site itself, including its landscape features, is of an integrated whole, and should not be truncated; it should have higher heritage significance than the individual buildings.

2.4.2 The Main Wing (Grade 1)

The Panel considered that the Main Wing was of more significance than the other two wings as it accommodated the offices of the most senior government officials. It also once housed the chamber of the Legislative Council and Executive Council. Its forecourt was also a popular place for political and public events.

2.4.3 The East Wing (Grade 2)

The Panel considered that the East Wing was of higher importance than the West Wing as it was the offices of senior government officers and some of its original fabrics still exist.

2.4.4 The West Wing (Grade 3)

The West Wing was mainly used as normal government offices. In comparison with the other two wings, the Panel considered the West Wing of lowest importance in terms of historical and political development in the history of Hong Kong.

2.5 The Panel concluded that the aforesaid four items warranted different

rating in view of their different levels of significance.

3. Viewpoints and Recommendations

3.1 While the primary task of the assessment panel is on grading, the Panel would like to express a number of viewpoints as set out below to be conveyed to the AAB for consideration:

3.1.1 The Panel, borrowing the words from the Annex of the “Proposals Concerning the Desirability of a Standard-Setting Instrument on Historic Urban Landscapes” (2011), opined that the three wings of the Post-1950 Former CGO are examples of “non-exceptional heritage elements but present in a coherent way with a relative abundance”. From a conservation viewpoint, the Post-1950 Former CGO site is an integral site which should not be dismembered.

3.1.2 The Panel wished to refer to some of the latest international heritage conservation documents, notably the Xi’an Declaration and the “Proposals Concerning the Desirability of a Standard-Setting Instrument on Historic Urban Landscapes” (2011), to substantiate their above viewpoints and recommendations for AAB’s consideration.

3.1.3 Making reference to the PMT Report, the Panel considered that one of the reasons why the Post-1950 Former CGO site is significant is “their setting within an open green space adjacent to several important historic buildings” (p. 107 of the PMT Report).

4. Other Observations

4.1 Some assessment panel members felt that attention should be given to protecting the setting of the Post-1950 Former CGO site within the so-called “Government Hill” area, though the boundary of the “Government Hill” has changed significantly since the beginning of the colonial era. There may be a need to define the boundary and “develop planning tools and practices to conserve and manage settings” which may include specific legislative measures, development of comprehensive conservation and management plans or systems. (p. 3 of Xi’an Declaration).

4.2 The Panel realized that the Post-1950 Former CGO site stands

on an area now bounded by Robinson Road along the Botanical & Zoological Gardens on the south, Battery Path along Queen's Road Central on the north, Garden Road on the east, and Pottinger Street all the way up to the Former Central Police Station Compound on the west and noted that according to the PMT Report, the historic sites of this area "offer very interesting opportunities for the interpretation of the history of the development of Hong Kong" (p. 135 of the PMT Report).

- 4.3 The Panel wished to recommend AAB to consider the tools which could be used to conserve and manage the settings of historic sites. Reference can be made to Section IV of the "Proposals Concerning the Desirability of a Standard-Setting Instrument on Historic Urban Landscapes" (2011), in which the tools are classified into four categories, namely (a) Civic engagement tools; (b) Knowledge and planning tools; (c) Regulatory systems; and (d) Financial tools.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 am.