

# LCQ10: Future plan for the General Post Office Building in Central

Following is a question by the Hon Hui Chi-fung and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (March 27):

Question:

The Government plans to relocate the Hongkong Post's Headquarters, which is currently housed in the General Post Office Building in Central (GPO Building) situated in Site 3 of the new Central harbourfront, to a postal complex to be built in Kowloon Bay. The vacated GPO Building will be demolished to allow Site 3 to be used for commercial development. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the timetable for the demolition works of the GPO Building;
- (2) of the planned timing for including Site 3 in the Land Sale Programme;
- (3) as some community groups have requested that the GPO Building be preserved in-situ in view of its conservation value, whether the Government has invited the Antiquities Advisory Board to conduct a historical building grading exercise for the building; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (4) given that Docomomo International, an international conservation body, included the GPO Building in the list of "Heritage in Danger" in 2015, and wrote to the Chief Executive in 2018 urging the Government to preserve the building, whether the Government has made a response; and
- (5) whether it will consider afresh preserving in-situ and revitalising the GPO Building?

Reply:

President,

The General Post Office Building (GPO Building) is at the south-western corner of Site 3 of the new Central harbourfront. The design concept of Site 3 was formulated under the Urban Design Study for the New Central Harbourfront (UDS) completed in 2011 following two stages of public engagement (PE) exercises. The relevant urban design requirements were subsequently incorporated into the planning brief for the site endorsed by the Town Planning Board (TPB) in December 2016 after consultation with the Central and Western District Council (DC) and the Harbourfront Commission. When taking forward the development of Site 3 in future, the developer should deliver and comply with the requirements laid down in the planning brief.

According to the design concept recommended by the UDS and the requirements of the planning brief, implementing the development of Site 3 requires demolition of the GPO building. The development of the site will not only provide additional supply of Grade A office in the Central Business

District, its prime harbourfront location will also be conducive to providing quality public open space for public enjoyment. The design for the site has to incorporate a low-density commercial development with building height significantly lower than surrounding office blocks; a quality and green public open space occupying more than half of the site area (i.e. at least 2.5 hectares); and a continuous landscaped deck, stretching across the site in a north-south direction and bringing people from the hinterland of Central to the new harbourfront, which will enhance the accessibility of the new Central harbourfront.

My reply to Hon Hui Chi-fung's question is as follows:

(1) The GPO Building will be demolished by the developer of Site 3 upon completion of the following two reprovisioning works:

(a) reprovisioning of the Hongkong Post Headquarters to a government site near the Central Mail Centre in Kowloon Bay. The Finance Committee (FC) of the Legislative Council (LegCo) approved the related funding in October 2018 and the new building is expected to commence operation in 2023; and

(b) reprovisioning the district-tied postal facilities (viz. GPO Delivery Office, Speedpost Section, GPO Post Office Counters and Post Office Box Section) in the part of Site 3 to the north of Lung Wo Road. The facilities will be holistically designed and constructed by the developer in accordance with the requirements laid down by the Government.

(2) Site 3 has yet been included in the 2019-20 Land Sale Programme. As similar to other commercial sites disposed of by the Government, the Government will make necessary announcement in the annual and quarterly land sale programmes following the established practice.

(3), (4) and (5) A concern group requested the Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB) to carry out grading assessment on the GPO Building in October 2018. In December 2018, the AAB, on the basis of its decision in September 2013 (i.e. grading assessment on buildings built in 1970 or later would not be carried out for the time being), decided not to carry out grading assessment on the GPO Building, which commenced operation in 1976.

As mentioned above, the UDS recommendations are made after extensive PE exercises. Different public and advisory bodies, including the LegCo Panel on Home Affairs and Panel on Development, AAB, former Harbour-front Enhancement Committee, TPB and the 18 DCs, had been consulted during the process. It is worth mentioning that respecting cultural heritage was one of the urban design themes in Stage 2 PE of the UDS. To this end, the relevant consultation digest had listed a range of cultural heritage sites in Central, and the GPO Building was not amongst such sites. Retaining the GPO Building will contravene the design concept of Site 3 and requirements stipulated in the planning brief, undermining the overall development potential of Site 3 and preventing the vision of creating a more attractive, vibrant and accessible new Central harbourfront from being brought into fruition.

As we have responded at the meetings of the LegCo Public Works

Subcommittee and FC, the Government will continue to take forward the development of Site 3 according to the original design concept and the planning brief of the site.