

#### LCQ14: Rating of historical buildings

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Following is a question by the Hon Choy So-yuk and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Dr Patrick Ho, in the Legislative Council today (December 6):

Question:

It has been reported that buildings must be at least 50 years old in order to be considered for classification as historical buildings. As it has only been 48 years since the opening of the Star Ferry Pier in Central in 1958, the Pier is not eligible to be classified as a historical building. However, some members of the public, after looking up the relevant information, have pointed out that in fact the Pier officially opened in 1957. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) of the minimum years of history required for a building to be considered for classification as a historical building; whether the commencement or completion date of the works concerned or the opening date of the building is used as the basis for calculating its years of history, and whether such calculation method is prescribed in any internal guidelines of the Government; if so, of the details and whether the relevant documents may be made public; if such calculation method is not prescribed in any guidelines, the reasons for that;
- (b) whether it knows the respective commencement and completion dates of the works for the eastern and western arms of the Star Ferry Pier in Central, and their opening dates; and
- (c) whether it will re-consider classifying the Star Ferry Pier in Central as a historical building so that it will be protected by the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (Cap. 53); if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

Madam President,

- (a) Pursuant to Section 3 of the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (Cap. 53),

the Antiquities Authority may, after consultation with the Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB) and with the approval of the Chief Executive, by notice in the Gazette, declare any place, building, site or structure, which the Authority considers to be of public interest by reason of its historical, archaeological or palaeontological significance to be a monument. The minimum years of history of a building is not a statutory requirement for declaration as a monument under the Ordinance.

The AAB has adopted a grading system for assessing the heritage value of historical buildings. The grading criteria comprises a series of factors including the historical significance and architectural merits of the building, and its association with important event(s) and person(s), as well as its social value. The Board will, on the basis of these criteria, assess whether a building qualifies to be a declared monument and may recommend so to the Government. As for the other historical buildings which are not yet qualified to be declared monuments, the Board would rate their heritage values according to the following grading system -

Grade I buildings are those of outstanding merit, which every effort should be made to preserve if possible;

Grade II buildings are those of special merit; efforts should be made to selectively preserve; and

Grade III buildings are those of some merit, but not yet qualified for consideration as monuments. These are to be recorded and used as a pool for future selection.

The grading system, which has no statutory authority, serves as general heritage assessment guidelines for the Board and the Government.

(b) Construction of the Star Ferry Pier in Central commenced in October 1955 and was completed in March 1957. The pier was opened in December 1957.

(c) The Government conducted a built heritage impact assessment for the Central Reclamation Phase III (CRIII) in 2001. Having assessed the impact of the CRIII project on the Star Ferry Pier, the report recommended to re-provision the Star Ferry Pier at the new Central Ferry Piers. The Star Ferry Pier is neither a declared monument nor a graded historical building on the basis of its heritage value. As such, it would not be preserved in-situ. In March 2002, the AAB deliberated on the recommendation of the assessment report and had no objection to the re-provisioning arrangement. Against this background, we would not re-consider declaring the Star

Ferry Pier as a monument under the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance.

We understand that there are views in the community that the Star Ferry Pier should be preserved so as to preserve its collective memory. In the context of the Central Reclamation Urban Design Study undertaken by the Planning Department, the Government would consider, from an urban planning perspective, how to incorporate the special features of the Star Ferry Pier in the design of the new Central harbourfront. In addition, the major features of the Star Ferry Pier have been recorded and stored as 3D images through an advanced laser scanning technology by the Civil Engineering and Development Department. The Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO), together with other relevant government departments, will be taking photographic record on the structural features of the Pier. AMO is also exploring whether it is feasible to preserve some of the historical items of the Pier, so that these items may be considered for display in future.

Ends/Wednesday, December 6, 2006

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