

Secretary, Town Planning Board
15/F, North Point Government Offices
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By email only

3 June 2016

香港觀鳥會
THE
HONG
KONG
BIRD
WATCHING
SOCIETY
Since 1957 成立

Dear Sir/Madam,

Objection to the planning applications for Proposed Temporary Open Storage of Brand-New Vehicles (Private Cars and Light Goods Vehicles) for a Period of 3 Years at Deep Bay Road, Ngau Hom Sha, Yuen Long (A/YL-HT/1029)

The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (HKBWS) would like to raise an objection to the planning application A/YL-HT/1029 under Section 16 based on the following reasons:

1. Adverse disturbance to the surroundings of Ngau Hom Sha

The Ngau Hom Sha egretty was discovered in 2012, with a total of 6 nests recorded, and was still active in 2013. Even though the site was found abandoned in 2014, probably due to the destruction of the bamboo cluster which the egrets previously nested on (Figure 1), the area still have the potential for the recolonization of breeding egrets (Figure 2). We are concerned the proposed development would cause further undesirable disturbance to the area and adversely affecting breeding egrets recolonizing in Ngau Hom Sha.

2. The Town Planning Board should not encourage “develop first, apply later”

2.1. From Google Earth aerial photographs, some obvious landscape changes were observed on the images taken on 22 December 2013 and onwards (Figure 3). During our site visit conducted in April 2015, the application site was found to be in operation for the open storage of metal ware (Figure 4). There was also an unauthorized development of open storage identified by the Planning Department in May 2015 at the application site (enforcement case number: E/YL-HT/837). We consider that this is “develop first, apply later”. We are concerned the approval of the current application would further legitimize the current misuse of the “Agriculture” zone, leading to the promotion of “develop first, apply later” and “destroy first, develop later” attitudes among landowners in the locality.

2.2. The HKBWS strongly urges the Town Planning Board (the Board) to proactively deter “destroy first, develop later” as stated in a press release in 2011, “the Board is



determined to conserve the rural and natural environment and will not tolerate any deliberate action to destroy the rural and natural environment in the hope that the Board would give sympathetic consideration to subsequent development on the site concerned"¹. The approval of this application is not in-line with the Board's promise to deter "destroy first, develop later"; in fact, it would provide incentives for developers/land owners to undertake eco-vandalism in hopes of the Board's approval for development in the future. Decisions made by the Board should take into consideration that the undesirable precedent it sets for future applications, hence development permission should not be granted after the site has suffered from eco-vandalism.

The HKBWS respectfully requests the Board to take our comments into consideration and **reject** the current application. Thank you for your kind attention.

Yours faithfully,



Woo Ming Chuan
Conservation Officer
The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society

cc.
The Conservancy Association
Designing Hong Kong
Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden
WWF-Hong Kong

¹ Press Release – Town Planning Board adopts approaches to deter, "destroy first, build later" activities. 4 July 2011. Available at: <http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201107/04/P201107040255.htm>

Figure 1. The conditions of the Ngau Hom Sha egretty before and after the destruction. Note that the absence of bamboo cluster in the photograph taken 2014 indicated by the red box.

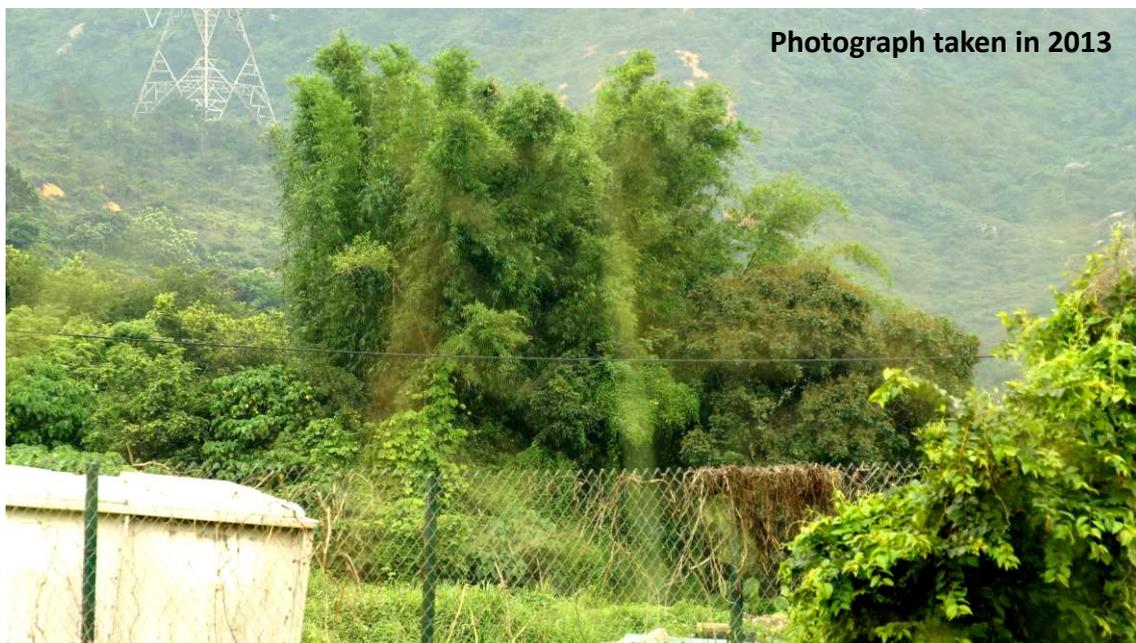


Figure 2. The well-vegetated condition of the surroundings of the Ngau Hom Sha egretty (photograph taken in April 2015).



Figure 3. Google Earth aerial photographs showing the change in landscape at the application site (approximate location indicated by the yellow circle) and its surroundings.



Mar 2013

Dec 2013

Aug 2015

Figure 4. The application site is in use for open storage of metal ware (photographs taken in April 2015).

