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By email only

28 June 2016

香港觀鳥會  
THE  
HONG  
KONG  
BIRD  
WATCHING  
SOCIETY

Since 1957 成立

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Comments on the draft The Peak Area Outline Zoning Plan No. S/H14/12**

The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (HKBWS) would like to object to the amendment item A, which is to rezone a site opposite to 23 Coombe Road from “Green Belt” (GB) to “Residential (Group C) 6” (R(C)6) in The Peak Outline Zoning Plan (OZP).

**1. The rezoning site is of moderate ecological value**

The rezoning site is well-vegetated (Figure 1). In the plant survey report submitted for the planning application Y/H14/4 (which is directly related to the current amendment of the OZP), the woodland in the rezoning site was found to be mature (possibly 50 years or older and would take up to 40 years or more to recreate the naturally regenerated woodland) and un-fragmented with moderate diversity of native flora (67 species within 0.103 ha). It has good linkages to adjacent dense woodland of higher ecological value, and has potential to become a more mature and complex woodland in the absence of human disturbance. In addition, one seedling of the globally vulnerable<sup>1</sup> Silver-back Artocarpus (*Artocarpus hypargyreus*) was found within the rezoning site, while eight tree specimens of the Silver-back Artocarpus were found immediately outside the site (i.e. within 10 metres from the site boundary)(Figure 2). The report concluded that the rezoning site is of moderate ecological value.

**2. The rezoning site should be kept as a GB zone**

Under the approved The Peak OZP, the planning intention of a GB zone is “*primarily for defining the limits of urban and sub-urban development areas by natural features and to contain urban sprawl as well as to provide passive recreational outlets. There is a general presumption against development within this zone”.*

As explained in the previous section, the rezoning site is well-vegetated and is of moderate ecological value. It currently acts as a buffer between the residential developments in the area and the Aberdeen Country Park and is entirely in line with the planning intention of

<sup>1</sup> Sun, W. 1998. *Artocarpus hypargyreus*. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Version 2015.2. <<http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/32383/0>>.



the GB zone, thus it should be retained as a GB zone.

### 3. Adverse ecological impacts of the rezoning

The proposed R(C)6 zoning would lead to vegetation removal for the construction of a new house, which destroys the ecological value of the rezoning site and reduces the habitat quality of the adjacent woodland. It would also greatly reduce the width of the GB zone in the area from 30 – 50 metres to about 10 metres, hence lowering the buffering capacity of the GB zone for the adjacent Aberdeen Country Park (Figure 3). This is not in line with the planning intention of a GB zone and would bring off-site adverse impacts to the adjacent GB zones. Therefore, the proposed amendment in the OZP from GB to R(C)6 zone should be rejected. Since the proposed rezoning will encourage urban sprawl to the detriment of the natural features, reasons for diverging from the planning intention should be clearly stated should the amendment be accepted.

### 4. Concerns regarding the Magazine Gap Black Kite roost

The Black Kite (*Milvus migrans*) roost at Magazine Gap is not only the largest in Hong Kong, but as the largest known roost in southern China it is also of regional importance (Figure 4). We are concerned the approval of the proposed amendment of the OZP would set an undesirable precedent for future developments in the GB zones of the area (Figure 5), leading to cumulative impacts on the Black Kite roost of regional importance (i.e. increase in disturbance to the roost caused by human activities, adverse ecological impacts of construction works, light pollution during construction and operation phase, etc.)

### 5. Not in line with the GB rezoning policy

In recent years, the Policy Address proposed to rezone GB areas which “*are devegetated, deserted or formed*”<sup>2</sup>, but nothing was mentioned for the rezoning of vegetated GB areas. We consider the current rezoning of well-vegetated GB zone is not in line with the previous policy addresses and contradictory to the “*presumption against development*” of GB zones; hence should be rejected. Since this site is neither devegetated, deserted nor formed, reasons for diverging from this policy intention should be clearly stated should the proposed amendment be accepted.

### 6. Concluding Remarks

6.1. The HKBWS understands that the rezoning is intended to conserve the grade one historic building Carrick at 23 Coombe Road. However, nature conservation should not be sacrificed for heritage conservation, particularly where options exist. In the planning application Y/H14/4 which is directly related to the current amendment of

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<sup>2</sup> 2011-2012 Policy Address (para 43(iv)); 2013 Policy Address (para 73 (ii)); 2014 Policy Address (para 125).

OZP, five potential sites were identified. However, it is unclear what the selection criteria were, where the potential alternative sites are, and why the current GB zone is preferred. The Government and the Metro Planning Committee of the TPB have not fully explored all possible alternatives for the current rezoning and justifications for preferring the developer's proposal over other alternatives should be clearly explained.

- 6.2. Should this amendment be approved, both the proponent and those willing to approve the proposed amendment in the TPB and relevant Government departments and bodies must expect to be held accountable for sacrificing the public assets of ecological, landscape and passive recreational value of the site in order to facilitate a private luxury development in what will become a landmark example of unsustainable development for Hong Kong.
- 6.3. The "like-for-like" land exchange for the *in-situ* heritage preservation at 23 Coombe Road should be kept within residential zonings of low ecological value, while the GB area of moderate ecological value should be retained as a buffer between the residential area and the Aberdeen Country Park.
- 6.4. The HKBWS, therefore, respectfully requests the TPB to take our comments into consideration and reject the amendment of the OZP. Thank you for your kind attention.

Yours faithfully,



Woo Ming Chuan  
Conservation Officer  
The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society

cc.

AFCD - Miss NG Ka Yan, Nature Conservation Officer (Hong Kong)

AMO - Ms. SIU Lai Kuen, Executive Secretary

CE's Office

DevB - Mr. CHAN Mo Po, Secretary for Development

LandsD - Ms. LINN Bernadette, Director of Lands

PlanD - Mr. LING Kar Kan, Director of Planning

The Conservancy Association

Designing Hong Kong

Green Power

Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden

WWF – Hong Kong

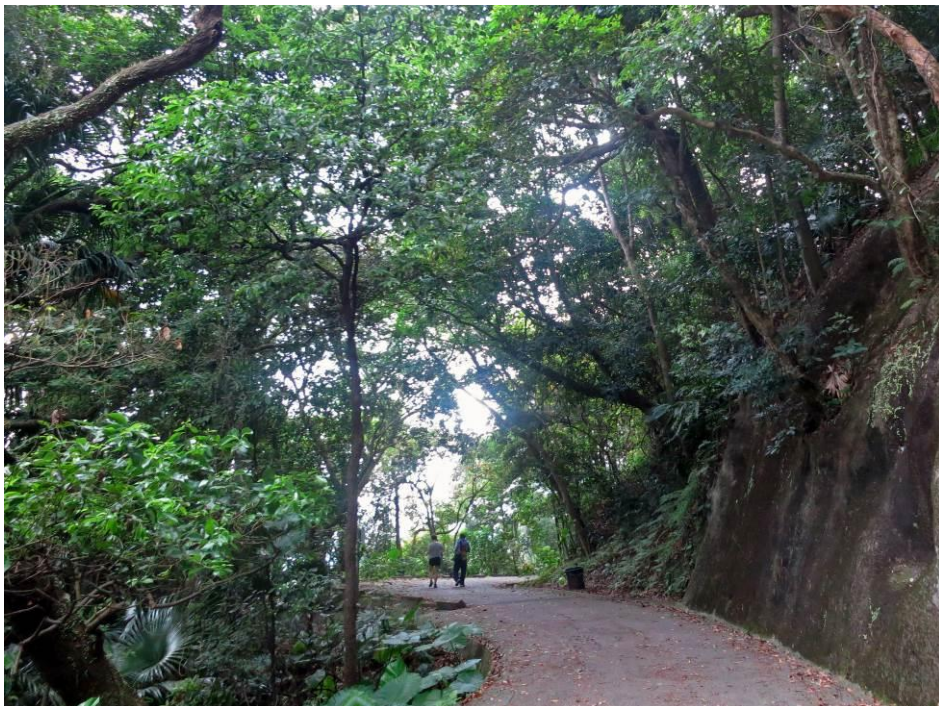
**Figure 1.** The well-vegetated condition of the application site.



**Figure 2.** The globally Vulnerable Silver-back Artocarpus (*Artocarpus hypargyreus*) found within 10 metres from the application site



**Figure 3.** The well-vegetated Green Belt where the application site is situated (right-hand side of the footpath) and the Aberdeen Country Park (left-hand side of the footpath).



**Figure 4.** Hundreds of Black Kites returning to their roosting sites at Aberdeen Country Park at dusk (looking to the south at the junction of Guildford Road and the Peak Road).



Figure 5. Other GB zones in the Magazine Gap area.

