

1. The meeting was resumed at 9:00 a.m. on 14.1.2015.
2. The following Members and the Secretary were present at the resumed meeting:

Mr Stanley Y.F. Wong Vice-Chairman

Mr Roger K.H. Luk

Dr C.P. Lau

Mr Clarence W.C. Leung

Ms Anita W.T. Ma

Professor K.C. Chau

Mr Lincoln L.H. Huang

Mr F.C. Chan

Mr Frankie W.C. Yeung

Deputy Director of Lands
Mr Jeff Y.T. Lam

Principal Environmental Protection Officer (Strategic Assessment),
Environmental Protection Department
Mr Victor W.T. Yeung

Chief Engineer (Works),
Home Affairs Department
Mr Martin W.C. Kwan

Director of Planning
Mr K.K. Ling

[Open Meeting]

3. The following Government representatives, the representers and commenters and their representatives were invited to the meeting at this point:

- Mr C.K. Soh - District Planning Officer/Shu Tin, Tai Po and North (DPO/STN), Planning Department (PlanD)
- Mr C.T. Lau - Senior Town Planner/Tai Po (STP/TP), PlanD
- Mr K.L. Wong - Engineer/Tai Po (1) (E/TP(1)), Transport Department (TD)
- Mr K.T. Chan - Nature Conservation Officer (Tai Po), (NCO/TP), Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD)

R13 (Ruy Barretto)

- Mr Ruy Barretto - Representer

R17 (The Conservancy Association), R1255 (劉善鵬)

- Mr Ng Hei Man, Roy - Representers' representative

R18 (Kadoorie Farm & Botanic Garden)

- Dr Chiu Sein Tuck)
- Mr Tony Nip) Representers' representatives
- Ms Woo Ming Chuen)

R26 (Yiu Chung Yim), R1629 (Fernando Chiu Hung Cheung), R1681 (Suen Palmer, Helen), R1687 (Chong Yiu Kwong), R2778 (Yvonne Lui), R2952 (W.L. Hon), R4642 (Erna Zint), R5245 (黎慎初), R5909 (Yvonne Lui), C91 (Lo Fai Road Greenbelt Concern Group) and C437 (B.Y. Lam)

- Ms Yvonne Lui (Mrs Hui)) Representers and representers' representatives
- Mr Au Chak Kei)

R47 (Yvonne Lui Yan Yan)

Mr Steve Sau - Representers' representative

R124 (胡明洋), R950 (劉志鍵)

Mr Roy Tam - Representers' representative

R191 (陳秀霞), R3290 (Jennifer Yip)

Ms Yip Kam Yee - Representer and representer's representative

R1133 (李淑芬)

Ms Lee Shuk Fun, Betty - Representer

Mr Mo Ka Chun - Representer's representative

R1327/R2925 (Lau Chee Sing), R1636 (Wong Pik Kiu) and R3432 (Clement Woo)

Dr Lau Chee Sing) Representers and representer's representatives

Mr Clement Woo)

R1638 (Lo Fai Road Green Belt Concern Group), R2053 (Leung Ching Yi) and R3044 (Wong Chi Kin)

Ms Betty Ho)

Mr Kan Cheng) Representer and representers' representatives

Ms Leung Ching Yi)

R1641 (The Incorporated Owners of Tycoon Place) and R2799 (Lin Pik Fan)

Ms Lin Pik Fan - Representer and representer's representative

R1642 (The Incorporated Owners of Richwood Park), R2581 (Mak Chi Keung) and R4556 (George Mak)

Mr Mak Chi Keung)

Ms Lam Bik Yu) Representer and representers' representatives

R1643 (The Incorporated Owners of Casa Marina I) and R1868 (Ho Mo Kuen)

Mr Chan Miu Chong - Representers' representative

R1685 (Tse Shing Chi)

Ms Tse Shing Chi - Representer

R2789 (Vincent Chu)

Mr Vincent Chu - Representer

R2798 (Windy Chan), R3287 (Chan Kit Wah, Eva), R4273 (Allan Ho), R4312 (Wong Shui Ka), R4318 (Janice Ng), R4335 (Leung Ka Lok), R4336 (Au Man Chi) and R6294 (Wong Jean Wah)

Mr Wong Jean Wah - Representer and representers' representative

R3867 (Chu Amy)

Mrs Amy Chu - Representer

R4091 (Cheung Ching Yee)

Ms Wong Lai Kuen - Representers' representative

R4148 (Lam Shuk Ching)

Ms Lam Shuk Ching - Representer

R6307 (深水埗區大窩坪居民關注組)

Mr Wong Lam Fung - Representers' representative

C83 (Y.T. Chan)

Mr Chan Yee Tak - Commenter

C405 (The Incorporated Owners of Forest Hill) and C406 (周家禮)

Mr Chow Ka Lai - Commenter and Commenters' representative

4. The Vice-Chairman extended a welcome to the attendees. He said that the representers, commenters and their representatives had finished presenting their oral

submissions to the Board at the session held on 18.12.2014 and the current session was for Members to raise questions on the oral submissions. To facilitate Members to appreciate the issues that had been raised by the representers, commenters and their representatives at the previous sessions, the Vice-Chairman noted that the Town Planning Board Secretariat had already provided Members with the audio recordings and the preliminary draft minutes of the Board's meetings held on 11.12.2014 and 18.12.2014 for the consideration of the representations and comments of Group 2. He then invited questions from Members.

[Mr Frankie W.C. Yeung returned to join the meeting at this point.]

Policy on Review of "GB" Sites and the Review Criteria

5. Noting the concern raised by some representers and commenters on the Government's policy on the review of "Green Belt" ("GB") sites, the Vice-Chairman asked DPO/STN to explain the basis of the "GB" review exercise and the criteria that had been adopted. In response, Mr C.K. Soh (DPO/STN) said that as planning was an on-going process, the zonings of different sites on Outline Zoning Plans (OZPs) would be reviewed from time to time, taking into account the economic and development needs of Hong Kong. In this regard, there was no change in policy as the review of OZPs was carried out on a regular basis.

6. Mr Soh continued to say that sites zoned "GB" mainly fell on slopes and hillsides near the fringe of urban or developed areas with varying site conditions. While some "GB" sites were located on devegetated hillsides, some were on vegetated land close to the existing developed areas or on densely vegetated areas that served as buffer areas for country parks or "Conservation Area" ("CA") zones. In the first stage "GB" review exercise completed in 2012, PlanD mainly identified "GB" sites that were devegetated, deserted or formed for rezoning to other uses. In the second stage "GB" review exercise announced in the 2013 Policy Address, "GB" sites adjoining development areas with a relatively lower buffer or conservation value and adjacent to existing transport and infrastructure facilities would be identified for rezoning with a view to releasing more sites for housing development in the short- to medium-term. In the two rounds of "GB" review, a total of about 70 "GB" sites covering 150 ha of land had been identified for rezoning to

residential use, providing about 80,000 flats. Mr Soh said that the relevant government departments would examine the impact caused by the proposed rezoning of “GB” sites for residential development and, where necessary, technical assessments would be conducted to ascertain the adverse impact caused and mitigation measures would be devised to minimise the potential adverse impacts.

[Ms Anita W.T. Ma returned to join the meeting at this point.]

7. Mr Ruy Barretto (R13) disagreed with DPO/STN and said that the Government’s policy on the review of “GB” sites as stated in the Policy Addresses of 2012, 2013 and 2014 had remained the same, i.e. to examine the use of “GB” sites that were devegetated, deserted or formed for rezoning to housing uses. The so-called second stage “GB” review was only mentioned in the personal blog of the Secretary for Development and should only be taken as a personal statement rather than the official Government policy. In this regard, the criteria for the “GB” review exercise should not be considered as having been changed. Notwithstanding this, he noted that some of the sites identified by PlanD had failed to meet the criteria for the so-called second stage “GB” review. For example, the “GB” site near Fung Yuen was only served by a narrow village track and was nowhere near any transport infrastructure while the site at Kon Hang was not provided with nor adjacent to any sewerage infrastructure. The Government had the social responsibility to retain areas zoned “GB” for the public good instead of selling them for development. Mr Barretto continued to say that the “GB” review exercise was not in line with the Government policy as set out in the Policy Addresses, there was no justification to rezone the “GB” sites on the Tai Po OZP to residential use and no ecological survey had been done to evaluate the ecological impact in accordance with the Technical Memorandum. The rezoning of “GB” sites was also contrary to Article 8 of the Convention for Biological Diversity which required Hong Kong to reduce the loss of its forests.

8. In response to a Member’s enquiry, Mr Ruy Barretto (R13) said that the Technical Memorandum he mentioned was the Technical Memorandum under the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance (EIAO) (Cap. 499) which provided guidelines and criteria for the evaluation of ecological impacts. According to the Technical Memorandum, the Government should consider such issues as the habitat quality,

naturalness and size of the habitat, number of species affected, size and abundance of the species affected, magnitude of the impact, reversibility of the impact, ecological linkage of the habitat to its surroundings, potential value of the habitat including the possibility of natural succession, age of the habitat and abundance of wildlife. In this regard, while all these issues would need to be properly assessed before any “GB” site should be considered for development, no information had been provided by the Government on the technical assessments and surveys that had been conducted. The same Member noted the response and said that as the current rezoning proposals were not classified as designated projects under the EIAO, the EIAO Technical Memorandum would not be applicable to the rezoning proposals.

9. Quoting paragraph 125 of the 2014 Policy Address, Ms Yvonne Lui (R2778) said that the policy was “*to rezone for residential use sites in Green Belt areas which are devegetated, deserted or formed, as well as suitable industrial sites*”. In this regard, the “GB” site at Lo Fai Road which was heavily vegetated did not meet the criteria set out in the 2014 Policy Address for rezoning to residential use. She also disagreed with DPO/STN’s view that there had been no change in policy. Noting that the Board had rejected 87% of all planning applications submitted in the last 10 years for the rezoning of “GB” sites, the current proposal to rezone 6 heavily vegetated “GB” sites was in itself a significant change in planning policy. As “GB” zones served particular functions, ‘GB’ sites that were vegetated should be retained and the priority should be to rezone only those “GB” sites that were devegetated, deserted or formed.

10. Dr Lau Chee Sing (R2925) said that while the 2013 Policy Address did mention that “*the PlanD is engaged in the next stage of Green Belt review, with the purpose of releasing more sites for housing development*”, there was no mention of the second stage “GB” review in the 2014 Policy Address. In this regard, the Government should clarify whether there was a clear policy to conduct the second stage “GB” review as well as the criteria for the review.

11. Mr Chow Ka Lai (C406) said that while the Government policy to identify “GB” sites that were devegetated, deserted or formed for rezoning for residential purposes was supported and accepted by the general public, the release of vegetated “GB” sites for

housing development mentioned in the so-called second stage “GB” review involved a change in policy. The Government should have first consulted the public and obtained its support before proceeding with the implementation of the revised policy. What the Government did was an abuse of procedure. Contrary to the statement made by DPO/STN, the current rezoning exercise was not a regular review of the OZP to identify any site suitable for housing development but was a purposely conducted exercise to implement a new policy, i.e. to rezone vegetated “GB” sites for housing development. As “GB” zones served particular functions and there was a general presumption against development in the “GB” zone, the current exercise to rezone a certain percentage of land from “GB” to residential use was in itself a major change in policy as it meant that sites that were zoned “GB” could be used for development. The Government’s exercise to rezone vegetated “GB” sites for residential use would set a precedent for developers with private land within the “GB” zone to follow suit. In this regard, the Government should consult the public on its change in policy for “GB” before conducting the rezoning exercise.

12. In response to a Member’s enquiry on the criteria for the “GB” review, Mr Ruy Barretto (R13) said that the criteria had been set out in the 2012, 2013 and 2014 Policy Addresses where it was clearly stated that “GB” sites that were devegetated, deserted or formed would be considered for rezoning. The 2013 Policy Address also stated that “GB” sites adjoining development areas with no ecological value would be reviewed for housing purpose. In gist, the “GB” sites to be identified for rezoning should be devegetated, deserted or formed, with no ecological value. However, the “GB” sites that were currently proposed for rezoning on the Tai Po OZP failed to meet the criteria as the sites were vegetated, had ecological value, served an important buffer function, were ecologically linked to other woodland areas, had the potential to become secondary woodland and provided a high recreational and amenity value to the local residents.

13. A Member asked DPO/STN to clarify the policy behind the “GB” review exercise. In response, Mr C.K. Soh (DPO/STN) said that the review of “GB” sites was part and parcel of an overall review of different land uses including sites zoned for “Government, Institution or Community” (“G/IC”) and “Industrial” (“I”) uses and to examine their suitability for housing development. In this regard, the “GB” review exercise should not be taken out of context.

14. Mr Soh continued to say that as the objective of the “GB” review was to identify sites to meet the housing demand in the short- to medium-term, the review criteria included not only whether the site was vegetated but also whether the site was adjacent to existing developments so that major site formation works and works to provide the necessary transport and infrastructural facilities would not be required. In reviewing the suitability of “GB” sites for development, the relevant considerations that were taken into account included the existing transport and infrastructure capacity, the current provision of community facilities and open space, the local character and existing development intensity, the potential environmental, visual and air ventilation impacts, and the appropriate development restrictions. The consideration of the first stage and second stage review were similar, except that in the second stage review, an assessment on whether the vegetation had been disturbed as well as the ecological and conservation value of the vegetation would also be conducted.

15. Noting that the “GB” sites at Lo Fai Road and near Fung Yuen were well vegetated and served a passive recreational function, a Member enquired whether these factors and the need to provide supporting community facilities had been taken into account when considering the rezoning of the two sites. In response, Mr Soh said that the “GB” site at Lo Fai Road was located about 500m away from the Tai Po Industrial Estate and about 150m away from Ting Kok Road and was mainly surrounded by the existing residential developments along Lo Fai Road. Taking into account these specific circumstances, it was considered that the “GB” site did not provide any significant buffer function for the existing residential estates along Lo Fai Road. Regarding the recreational function of the “GB” site, it was noted that there was a surplus provision of public open space in the Tai Po area. Besides, the existing residential developments in the area provided their own private open space and recreational facilities within their own clubhouses to serve the residents of the estates. Noting the representers’ concern about the existing trail within the “GB” site which was heavily used, it was proposed that the trail could be preserved and the details would be set out in the lease conditions of the future development. In response to the same Member’s enquiry, Mr Soh said that the future development at the “GB” site would be low-rise developments subject to a maximum building height of 5 storeys, and a requirement to meet a greening ratio of 30%.

16. For the “GB” site near Fung Yuen, Mr Soh said that the site had been assessed against all the review criteria and was found to be acceptable. Although the “GB” site was on a slope, the part of the site proposed to be rezoned had already avoided all the steep slopes so that the amount of site formation works required would be minimised. Moreover, the site was adjacent to existing developments, had direct access to Ting Kok Road and had no insurmountable problems in terms of the provision of sewerage and other basic infrastructure. The site also had no air ventilation problems nor significant visual impact.

17. Mr Ruy Barretto (R13) said that the proposed rezoning of vegetated “GB” sites were in breach of the criteria set out in the Policy Address and were contrary to the planning intention of the “GB” zone where there was a presumption against development. There were no strong planning grounds to justify the proposed developments as the steep hillsides in the peripheral areas with limited potential for urban type development should be retained.

18. Mr Wong Jean Wah (R6294) said that the current review of “GB” sites on such a large scale and with the Government taking the lead was a major change in policy. He considered it inappropriate for the Government to make such a major change in policy without prior public consultation.

Brownfield Site at Tung Tsz

19. The Vice-Chairman referred to a brownfield site near the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIED) mentioned by some representers and enquired whether that site was more suitable for residential development. In response, Mr Soh said that the said brownfield site was located at Tung Tsz and, according to an aerial photo taken in 1996, used to be covered by vegetation. The site had subsequently become devegetated and was currently used mainly as an open storage yard. Although the current open storage use was not in compliance with planning requirements, enforcement action could not be taken as the Planning Authority did not have the statutory powers to carry out enforcement action in areas covered by the Tai Po OZP. Contrary to the claim made by some representers, the site was not readily available for development in the short- to medium-term as site assembly was still required. About 80% of the site was under private ownership and the largest

landowner only held about two-thirds of the private land within the site. The remaining private land was under multiple ownership, some of which were Tso/Tong land. Moreover, technical assessments on the suitability of the development of the site would need to be conducted as major improvements to the traffic and sewerage infrastructure would be required to support any high-density residential development. Mr Soh also pointed out that while brownfield sites that could be made available for development in the long-term would be further considered, these sites should not be considered as a replacement for sites that were identified to meet the short- to medium-term housing demand in the “GB” review exercise.

[Mr Clarence W.C. Leung returned to join the meeting at this point.]

20. In response, Ms Betty Ho (R1638) said that the biggest landowner might hold more than two-thirds of the land as developers would normally engage more than one company to acquire the land required for any development project. Besides, as the brownfield site covered an area of 8 ha, the proposed development of the site for residential use could still proceed even though a portion of the site was yet to be acquired. Moreover, the Board should consider the land use of each site based on its own characteristics. The planning history of the Lo Fai Road site showed that it was originally zoned for residential use but was subsequently rezoned to “Open Space” (“O”) use and “GB” after careful consideration of the value of the site as a landscape buffer and a green area. Other than considering the development potential of the site, the Board should also consider the social value of the “GB” site at Lo Fai Road to the people living in the vicinity, particularly for the sick and the elderly who depended on this public space for leisure and recreation. Furthermore, it was highly unlikely that the future development at the Lo Fai Road site, which would offer panoramic views of Tolo Harbour, would be developed with flats at an average flat size of only 70m² as suggested by the Government. The representers would have no objection to the rezoning of the Lo Fai Road site for residential purposes should there be a pressing need for such development. However, as the biggest landowner of the brownfield site near HKIEd had already indicated an interest in developing the brownfield site to meet the housing need, it was not acceptable for the Government to rezone the Lo Fai Road site just because this was the easiest option. Priority should be given to the development of that brownfield site and the Lo Fai Road site should be retained as “GB”.

21. The Vice-Chairman reminded the attendees that the focus of the Board should be on the rezoning of the “GB” site at Lo Fai Road rather than the development of the brownfield site near HKIEd as a replacement for the Lo Fai Road site.

22. Ms Yvonne Lui (R2778) said that the Board should take the opportunity to change the use of the brownfield site near HKIEd which was currently not in compliance with planning requirements. Even though the brownfield site was not the subject of rezoning in this round of zoning amendment to the Tai Po OZP, from the macro point of view, the brownfield site would be more suitable to be rezoned for residential development than the “GB” site at Lo Fai Road. The amount of usable land from the brownfield site even after discounting land that was under multiple ownership was more than 6 ha, which was much larger than that to be provided by the Lo Fai Road site. More flats could be produced from the brownfield site and the implementation of the proposal, including the provision of the necessary infrastructure, could be completed within 5 years. The fact that small parcels of private land might remain scattered around the future development should not be a problem as this was quite common for large developments in the New Territories. It was sad to see the Government proposing to develop a “GB” site that would require the felling of 2,500 trees and not exploring the proposal to develop a brownfield site which was an eyesore and a health hazard to its surroundings. The Government should consider the possibility of developing brownfield sites before considering “GB” sites.

23. Mr Roy Tam (R124) said that the Board should take into account the availability of alternative replacement sites when considering the representations and comments in relation to the rezoning of “GB” sites on the Tai Po OZP. In this regard, the brownfield site near HKIEd should be taken into consideration. He also considered that it was not absolutely necessary for land within brownfield sites to be resumed. Provided that the land acquisition process was fair, just and in the public interest, private landowners of brownfield sites should also be allowed to take the lead in the development process by submitting planning applications where necessary and developing the site for residential use. The zoning amendments to the Tai Po OZP, which involved the development of vegetated “GB” sites for private high-class housing, were unreasonable and unacceptable. The Government should, as a matter of policy, consider the development of brownfield sites for residential purposes instead of identifying “GB” sites.

24. Dr Lau Chee Sing (R2925) said that being the District Councillor for the constituency, he had received numerous complaints over the years from residents about the brownfield site near HKIEd. In this regard, the Board should take the opportunity and allow the development of the brownfield site proposed by the landowner. The Government should let the developer deal with the provision of the necessary transport and sewerage infrastructure to support the future development.

History of the Lo Fai Road “GB” Site

25. A Member enquired about the history of the Lo Fai Road site and the reason why the site, which used to be a borrow area and had been devegetated, was zoned as “GB”. In response, Mr C.K. Soh (DPO/STN) said that on the first statutory plan (Tai Po OZP No. L/TP/47) covering the area exhibited on 12.12.1980, the Lo Fai Road site was zoned “Residential (Group C)” as the site used to be a borrow area providing fill material for the development of Tai Po New Town. Upon completion of a land use review in 1986, the majority of the site was rezoned to “GB” while the remaining part of the site was rezoned to “Residential (Group B)” (“R(B)”) and a strip of land along the southern part of the site was zoned “O”. The “GB” portion of the site was subsequently planted with trees, mainly the *Acacia confusa* species, to prevent the loss of water and soil. Hence, although the existing trees on the Lo Fai Road site were quite large in size, they were of low conservation value as they were mainly exotic species. In 2010, the strip of land zoned “O” and the “R(B)” portion of the site were also rezoned to “GB” as these two sites were on a natural slope where any development would require extensive site formation which was considered to be not cost effective. The rezoning of the two sites from “O” and “R(B)” to “GB” was supported by the Tai Po District Council. Mr Soh continued to say that when identifying “GB” sites for housing development, each “GB” site would be examined individually taking into account the characteristics and history of the site.

Tree Survey

26. In response to a Member’s enquiry, Mr Tony Nip (R18) said that the Government had not conducted a proper tree survey for the “GB” sites that were being

rezoned and had not provided any information on the ecological value of the “GB” sites concerned. Taking the “GB” site near Fung Yuen as an example, the site was no longer a plantation area but had already developed into a native and mature secondary woodland. However, other than some information on the number of trees and tree species, the TPB Paper did not provide any information on the value and function of the existing habitat of the “GB” site. Without comprehensive information on the existing habitat, it would be difficult for the Board to consider whether the rezoning of the “GB” site was appropriate as any such decision should be based on an assessment of the habitat value rather than simply on the number of trees and tree species affected. Mr Nip also opined that the Board should consider the existing condition of the “GB” site, which was a secondary woodland, rather than the previous condition of the site, i.e. that it had been a borrow area many years ago. Referring to a recent case where slope works carried out by the Government which had followed all the relevant regulations and procedures still caused the destruction of some rare orchid species that were found in the understorey of the slope’s vegetation, Mr Nip was concerned that the Government’s regulations and requirements might not always be effective in protecting the habitat. He considered that no development should be proposed for such vegetated areas as the “GB” site near Fung Yuen.

27. In response, Mr K.T. Chan (AFCD) said that the tree surveys for the “GB” sites were conducted by the contractors of Lands Department (LandsD) and verified by AFCD. For the “GB” site near Fung Yuen, as the site was a previous borrow area, the trees found were exotic species comprising mainly of *Acacia confusa* and *Eucalytus spp.* While there was an understorey of local trees and scrubs, these trees were too small in size to be considered as comprising a secondary woodland or serving the function of a habitat. Overall, the trees were considered to be mostly of exotic species.

28. Mr Ruy Barretto (R13), however, disagreed and said that with 1,286 large trees, the existing trees together with the understorey, whether native or not, did serve as a habitat that should not be destroyed. Mr Tony Nip (R18) considered that the understorey would definitely be comprised of native species and requested AFCD to provide the details of the tree survey. He also pointed out that the trees in the “GB” site near Fung Yuen were very dense and the site provided good habitat connectivity to its surroundings. Mr Roy Tam (R124) noted from a recent site visit that the trees at the site near Fung Yuen had not been

ringed or identified individually as was the usual practice for other tree surveys. In this regard, he was concerned whether a tree survey had been conducted for the “GB” site near Fung Yuen.

29. In response, Mr C.K. Soh, with the assistance of a tree survey plan shown on the visualiser, said that the tree survey for the site near Fung Yuen was carried out by LandsD’s contractors and the survey results had been verified by AFCD. When the survey was carried out, each tree within the area was ringed and a photo was taken for identification purposes. After the survey was completed and the survey results had been verified, the contractors should remove the tree rings as they could cause injury to the trees. According to the tree survey, out of about 1,260 trees identified within the “GB” site near Fung Yuen, about 880 trees or 70% were *Acacia confusa*, about 50 trees were *Eucalytus spp.* and about 50 trees were dead trees. A few trees that were rare species were also found, including a few *Pyrenaria spectabilis* trees and a *Aquilaria sinensis* tree. As these rare species were located at the periphery of the site, a clause could be added to the lease requiring the preservation of these trees should there be a need to do so.

30. Mr Tony Nip (R18) pointed out that as the tree survey only covered large trees with a trunk diameter exceeding 95mm, the statement that over 70% of the trees were exotic species were incorrect as all the young trees, seedlings and understorey had been excluded from the tree survey. Moreover, as a tree survey would not provide important information concerning the site such as its habitat value and ecological function, an ecological survey rather than a tree survey should be conducted for these “GB” sites.

31. Mr Roy Tam (R124) said that it was unfortunate that details of the tree survey and the tree survey report had not been provided in the TPB Paper for consideration. He also pointed out that a comprehensive assessment of the function of the “GB” and its ecological value should be provided in the TPB Paper for consideration.

32. Mr Ruy Barretto (R13) said that as the tree survey only counted large trees, it had missed all the saplings in the site which could amount to a few thousand small trees and which would serve an important ecological function. In this regard, the tree survey was totally inadequate for the purposes and an ecological survey should be conducted before any

consideration could be given to the rezoning of the “GB” site near Fung Yuen.

33. Mr Ng Hei Man (R17) said that while compensatory proposals such as the transplanting of valuable trees had been proposed, such proposals might not be practicable even when all the procedures and requirements under the Government’s technical guidelines had been followed. For the “GB” site near Fung Yuen, in view of the narrow site configuration and dense vegetation cover, any transplanting proposal would likely require the trees to be significantly trimmed, which would affect the survival of the trees.

34. Mr Roy Tam (R124) said that the Lands Administration Office Practice Note 7/2007 on ‘Tree Preservation and Tree Removal Application for Building Development in Private Projects’ was ineffective as an administrative tool to prevent the felling of trees within a development site. Referring to a land sale site at Sheung Shing Street in Ho Man Tin which was quite heavily vegetated, the developer decided to fell all the trees within the site except three trees that were proposed to be transplanted. The tree felling application was approved by the Government and, in the end, the entire development site was cleared of vegetation except for the three trees to be transplanted. Mr Tam considered that the current “GB” sites that were proposed to be rezoned would meet the same fate and would be cleared of all vegetation upon development. As a lot of private land that were zoned “GB” were held by private developers, the current rezoning exercise would set a precedent for the developers to submit planning applications for the development of their “GB” sites.

Ecological Value of the “GB” Sites

35. Mr Ng Hei Man (R17) said that when considering whether the “GB” site was suitable for rezoning, the focus should be on the ecological value of the site. For the “GB” site near Fung Yuen, there was a good hierarchy of trees in the existing woodland, with plenty of large trees and a very well-developed understorey. In this regard, the existing woodland as a whole had good ecological value. Even though the woodland had been a plantation with mainly exotic species and might not meet the standard of a typical secondary woodland, the existing combination of trees should be taken into account as many native species were found. There was potential in the future for the existing woodland to become a secondary woodland.

36. In response, Mr K.T. Chan (AFCD) said that although the existing woodland comprised an understorey of mainly native species, as most of the existing large trees were exotic species, the woodland could only be classified as a plantation area. He also pointed out that it was uncertain whether the understorey had the ability to successfully develop into a secondary woodland in future as it would depend on a number of factors including the ability of the native trees to bear fruit and their ability to compete with the seedlings of the exotic species.

37. Mr Roy Tam (R124) disagreed with the view that a woodland comprising mainly of exotic species could not be classified as a secondary woodland. He noted that the Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve, which was a plantation area, was also comprised mainly of exotic tree species. Moreover, whether a woodland comprised mainly of native or exotic tree species should not affect the function of the woodland. In response, Mr K.T. Chan (AFCD) said that in addition to the exotic tree species, the Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve had also been planted with many native tree species and was well linked with large areas of natural woodland and natural habitats in the vicinity.

38. A Member asked about the definition of a secondary woodland and the reason why a woodland that comprised mainly of exotic tree species could not be considered as a secondary woodland.

39. In response, Mr Tony Nip (R18) said that a woodland meant an area with trees and the value of the woodland should be assessed according to its habitat function and habitat value instead of the tree species that it was comprised of. Even though the “GB” site near Fung Yuen was mainly comprised of exotic trees, it was still a woodland. Moreover, he considered that there was a good chance that the native undergrowth could develop into a secondary woodland. As the *Acacia confusa* tree had a life expectancy of only 30 years, these trees would die naturally and open up a woodland gap for the native tree species to grow. Based on past experience, plantation areas filled with exotic trees which remained undisturbed would be gradually transformed into a secondary woodland with native tree species. He was worried about the view that secondary woodland comprising mainly of exotic species was not worthy of conservation. Noting that most of the trees in

Hong Kong had been felled during the Second World War and that many country park areas were filled with exotic tree species, large swathes of Hong Kong's Country Parks could be identified for development if such a view was held by the Government. Mr Nip continued to say that the "GB" site near Fung Yuen was part of a secondary woodland that was inter-connected with the woodland in Sha Lo Tung and the Pat Sin Leng Country Park and should not be disturbed.

[Mr Frankie W.C. Yeung left the meeting at this point.]

40. In response, Mr K.T. Chan (AFCD) said that the "GB" site near Fung Yuen was not surrounded by woodlands and was not well-connected to other woodland areas. Mr Tony Nip (R18), however, disagreed with AFCD's views and considered that the "GB" site near Fung Yuen was well-connected to the woodland area of Sha Lo Tung.

41. Noting that the "GB" site near Fung Yuen might form an integral part of the landscape and habitat of the surrounding area, a Member enquired whether the Government had taken into account the resultant habitat fragmentation that the proposed rezoning of the "GB" site would cause to the area. In response, Mr Soh said that other than the adverse impact on the landscape and habitat of the area, all the other issues had been addressed or were considered acceptable and it was decided on balance that the site was suitable for development. A Member asked what the overriding factor was that determined the suitability of the "GB" site near Fung Yuen for development. In response, Mr Soh said that there was no single overriding factor determining that the "GB" site should be developed. While he agreed that the site was an integral part of the landscape and habitat of the surrounding area, after taking into account the need to identify housing sites and the suitability and availability of other sites for housing development, it was considered that the "GB" site near Fung Yuen could be rezoned for residential use.

[Dr C.P. Lau left the meeting at this point.]

Recreational Use of the "GB" Sites

42. In response to a Member's enquiry on the recreational use of the "GB" site at Lo

Fai Road, Mr Mak Chi Keung (R2581) said that many residents in the surrounding estates made use of the “GB” site to do morning exercise, to go on short walks and as a play area for children. As the nearest alternative public open space was the Tai Po Waterfront Park which was over 2 km away, the “GB” site was heavily used by the local residents, particularly the elderly. The “GB” site was also used by students of HKIEd and by hikers who passed through the area. Although the surrounding residential estates were provided with their own private open space, these open spaces were relatively small in size. Even though the “GB” site might be of low ecological value, its functional value remained unchanged. Besides, with over 2,500 tall and large trees and recorded sightings of owls, snakes and bats, an ecological survey should be conducted to ascertain the ecological value of the “GB” site before any rezoning was proposed. In any case, the proposed development of the site would seriously affect the health of local residents who made use of the “GB” site for daily exercises, as testified by a cancer patient and an elderly resident in the video that was shown to the Board on 18.12.2014.

43. Ms Lin Pik Fun (R1641) said that the “GB” site at Lo Fai Road had an important value as a ‘green lung’ for the local residents. As the area was surrounded by several polluting uses including a waste water treatment plant, a landfill, a cement factory, a production plant of Towngas, the Tai Po Industrial Estate and Ting Kok Road, the “GB” site had served as an important buffer against the odour, noise and other pollutants generated by the polluting uses. The “GB” site was also valuable as it was the only recreational facility serving residents of the area.

44. Ms Yvonne Lui (R2778) said that the Lo Fai Road site was not a natural “GB” but had been a planned “GB” site since the 1980’s to serve as an integral part of the community. As the “GB” site was easily accessible to the public and was provided with street lights and a footpath, it served as an important passive recreational outlet for the local residents. The “GB” site should not be rezoned to other uses as it was still serving its function. Contrary to DPO/STN’s statement that the site had a low buffer value, it served as a very important buffer for the residents against the polluting uses in the vicinity of the Lo Fai Road area. Noting that the amount of air pollutants in the Tai Po area had always exceeded the Environmental Protection Department’s standards, the “GB” site at Lo Fai Road served as an important oxygen bar for the local community.

45. Mr Ruy Barretto (R13) said that the “GB” sites should be retained as “GB” to provide passive recreational outlets for the public rather than proposed for development into private luxury housing that did not meet any genuine housing need and were only used for speculation purposes. The development of the “GB” site near Fung Yuen would require the felling of thousands of trees and cause adverse visual impact on its surroundings. As the “GB” site was frequented by hikers and local people doing morning exercise, it should be retained as an amenity for the general public.

Buffer Function of the “GB” Sites

46. Noting that the “GB” site at Lo Fai Road was surrounded by the existing residential estates and some of these estates had direct views over Ting Kok Road and Tai Po New Town, a Member enquired how the “GB” site could serve as a buffer against the polluting uses mentioned by some representers, and whether there were any scientific findings in support of such claim. In response, Ms Betty Ho (R1638) said that the planning intention of the “GB” was to define the limits of urban and sub-urban development areas and to contain urban sprawl. As the “GB” site at Lo Fai Road was located on the ridgeline, the trees within the site served an important urban design and visual function, providing a visual and landscape buffer for the existing residential developments in the area. The development of the “GB” site into 5-storey residential blocks would result in a significant adverse visual impact on the surrounding area.

47. The Vice-chairman enquired how the “GB” site could serve as a buffer against the odour pollution caused by the surrounding uses. In response, Mr Chow Ka Lai (C406) said that as the “GB” site was on a higher platform than that of the existing residential developments in the vicinity, it served as a very effective barrier for these residential developments against the odour and other pollutants generated by the polluting uses. He continued to say that the “GB” site was an important passive open space for the local residents to take a break from their busy lives and to release stress. Ms Yvonne Lui (R2778) supplemented that as the “GB” site was on higher ground, it would serve as a buffer for Richwood Park, Tycoon Place and Forest Hill against the odour and pollutants from the Tai Po Industrial Estate, the ex-landfill site and the sewage treatment plant when

winds blew from the south and south-west. Mr Chow continued to say that the “GB” site served as an important buffer against the dust from the cement factory located to the south-east of the site as well as from the traffic noise and air pollutants from Ting Kok Road. He pointed out that the air and noise pollution from Ting Kok Road was expected to increase significantly with the increase in traffic generated by several new developments in the area, such as the spa resort at Ting Kok, the Tsz Shan Temple development and the public beach at Lung Mei.

48. In response to a Member’s enquiry on the buffer functions of “GB” zones, Mr Soh said that “GB” zones in general served as a buffer for country parks and “CA” zones on OZPs. “GB” zones also served to define the limits of urban and sub-urban development areas by natural features and to contain urban sprawl. At the local level, “GB” zones were sometimes used to serve as a buffer between land uses that might have interface issues. For the “GB” site at Lo Fai Road, as the Tai Po Industrial Estate was about 500m away from the site, he did not see how the “GB” site served as a buffer for the residential estates. Even if the “GB” site did serve as a buffer as claimed, he considered that the buffer function would not be eliminated by the proposed development of the site. He then elaborated the context of individual “GB” sites in turn. For the “GB” site near Fung Yuen, as there were existing developments to the east and west of the site, and the Sha Lo Tung woodland and country park area were located further to the north, the “GB” site did not serve any major buffer function. For the “GB” site near Fu Heng Estate, out of a very large “GB” zone, only a small portion in the southern part of the “GB” zone which was located at a road junction was proposed to be rezoned for residential use. Taking into account the results of a tree survey, a very large tree would be preserved and a tree preservation clause would be added to the lease. For the “GB” site at Lai Chi Shan, it was a piece of devegetated land with the northern part of the site being used as a works area. As the site was located in a valley with an existing residential development located to the east of the site, the “GB” site did not serve any major buffer function. For the “GB” site at Kon Hang, part of the site was already developed with existing settlements and houses. The rezoning of the site would allow the remaining Government land to be developed for residential purposes. The proposal would not cause any adverse ecological impact as the development would be located away from the existing stream within the area.

49. Noting that the proposed rezoning of the “GB” site near Fung Yuen would only leave behind two narrow strips of vegetated land, a Member enquired how the remaining “GB” could continue to serve as a buffer. In response, Mr Soh said that the “GB” site near Fung Yuen did serve as a buffer separating the “Comprehensive Development Area” (“CDA”) at Fung Yuen from the Tai Po Industrial Estate and the two narrow strips of remaining “GB” could continue to serve the purpose. As this particular “GB” site was not located at the fringe of Tai Po New Town or adjacent to country parks or “CA” zones, it did not serve as a buffer to define the limits of urban and sub-urban development areas nor as a buffer for country parks and areas zoned “CA”.

50. A Member enquired about the amount of “GB” land that would remain to serve the buffer function. In response, Mr Soh said that the buffer value of the “GB” site near Fung Yuen was not high as it only served as a buffer between the “CDA” site and the Tai Po Industrial Estate which was in fact quite far away from each other. The proposed development of part of the “GB” site into low-rise residential developments would not affect the function of the remaining part of the “GB” site to serve as a buffer between the “CDA” site and the Tai Po Industrial Estate. Ms Betty Ho (R1638) considered that the argument was flawed as this would mean that the proposed low-rise residential development would become the buffer in place of the original “GB” zone.

51. A Member enquired whether there was any objective criteria to determine the buffer function of a “GB” site. In response, Mr Soh said that there was no fixed standard for a site to serve as a buffer and the specific circumstances of the site would need to be taken into account. Taking the example of the “GB” site near Fung Yuen, it was considered that the buffer function of the “GB” zone would remain even if part of the “GB” zone was proposed for development.

52. Mr Mak Chi Keung (R2581) disagreed with DPO/STN’s view that the development of the proposed “GB” site at Lo Fai Road would not affect the buffer currently provided to the existing residents in the area. He said that the value of the “GB” site was to serve as a buffer for the existing estates along Lo Fai Road from the noise and odour generated by Ting Kok Road, the Tai Po Industrial Estate and the cement factory. The “GB” site in between Ting Kok Road and the Lo Fai Road “GB” site was mainly on a steep

slope so that the vegetation on that “GB” site would not serve the same buffer function as the Lo Fai Road “GB” site. Moreover, even though the existing trail within the Lo Fai Road “GB” site were to be reprovisioned by the future developer, whether the recreational value of that trail could be retained was questionable. Also, even though the future developer would be required to meet the greening ratio of 30%, the proposed landscaped area would be provided in the form of private open space and would unlikely be open to the public.

53. On the buffer function of the “GB” site near Fung Yuen, Mr Tony Nip (R18) said that the buffer function of the entire woodland would be much reduced as development on the rezoned “GB” site would significantly enhance the edge effect of the existing “GB” zone. The current function of this “GB” site as a buffer for Sha Lo Tung and the country park area to the north would be significantly reduced as the buffer function provided by the two remaining strips of “GB” would be much reduced due to the edge effect. Mr Nip was also concerned about the site formation and slope works to be conducted for the development of this “GB” site which was located on a slope. The slope stabilisation works required for the proposed development would often extend beyond the boundaries of the proposed development site, which meant that the extent of the “GB” zone affected would likely cover a much larger area.

Sales of “GB” Sites for Private Development

54. In response to a Member’s enquiry on whether all the “GB” sites would be sold for private development, Mr C.K. Soh said that as all the “GB” sites identified were Government land, whether the site would be reserved for private housing or public housing development would depend on the location of the site and the development intensity of the existing developments in the surrounding. While the “GB” site at Tai Po Area 9 was proposed for public housing development, the other “GB” sites including the one at Lo Fai Road had been proposed for private residential development as they were less conveniently located and were surrounded by low-density developments.

Precedent Effect

55. A Member enquired whether the current proposal to rezone “GB” sites for residential use would set a precedent for the Board’s consideration of future rezoning applications. In response, Mr Soh said that no matter whether the proposed development was initiated by the Government or by the private sector, the same set of assessment criteria would be adopted to consider the suitability of the “GB” site for development, i.e. whether there was adequate transport and infrastructure capacity, whether the provision of community facilities and open space would be adequate, whether the proposed development was in line with the local character and development intensity of its surroundings, and whether the proposed development would generate environmental, visual and air ventilation impacts. As each rezoning proposal would be assessed based on its individual merits, the current rezoning exercise would not set an undesirable precedent for rezoning applications in future.

56. Ms Betty Ho (R1638) noted that DPO/STN had failed to mention the ‘Town Planning Board Guidelines for Application for Development within Green Belt Zone under section 16 of the Town Planning Ordinance’ (TPB PG-No. 10) where it was specifically stated that there was a general presumption against development in the “GB” zone and that, for residential development, a plot ratio up to 0.4 only might be permitted. It was due to these guidelines that 87% of all applications concerning the “GB” zone had been rejected by the Board. However, the Government’s current “GB” review exercise had disregarded TPB PG-No. 10. As the second stage review criteria would consider all vegetated “GB” sites and only required that the “GB” sites were adjoining existing development areas and adjacent to existing transport and infrastructure facilities, this would mean that incrementally, all “GB” sites could become available for development.

57. Mr Tony Nip (18) said that a very dangerous precedent would be set by the Board if the Government’s “GB” rezoning proposals were accepted. As planning applications submitted by the private sector very often referred to precedent cases, the current rezoning of vegetated “GB” sites that were considered to be of low ecological value would certainly be quoted as a precedent by future applicants. It was also unacceptable to classify these “GB” sites to be of low ecological value based solely on their previous status as plantation areas, without the backing of an ecological survey to ascertain their ecological functions.

“GB” Site near Fu Heng Estate

58. In response to a Member’s enquiry regarding the “GB” site near Fu Heng Estate, Mr Soh said that while the site had an area of 5,000m², it had two development constraints in the central part of the site in that an east-west non-building area would need to be provided and an existing large tree would need to be preserved. According to the Government’s preliminary assessment, the site could be developed into a high-density residential development at a plot ratio of 6, providing 680 flats in 3 building blocks.

59. Mr Roy Tam (R124) said that the large tree that was found at the “GB” site near Fu Heng Estate was in fact a tree that was more than 50 years old and could be classified as an old and valuable tree. As the tree was located at the centre of the site, it would become a serious constraint to the development of the site and the current development proposal was not ideal. Moreover, the standard approach adopted by private developers to preserve a tree was simply to encase the existing tree in a large pot, which was contrary to the principle of tree conservation.

Need for Low-Density Housing

60. Noting that the “GB” sites at Lo Fai Road and near Fung Yuen were proposed for low-density residential developments, a Member enquired whether such developments were also in great demand. In response, Mr Soh said that PlanD’s responsibility was to identify land that was suitable for housing development and it was understood that all types of housing land were in demand. In the current exercise, sites for high-density, medium-density and low-density residential use for both private and public housing had been identified.

61. Ms Yvonne Lui (R2778) said that there was no urgency to develop low-density residential developments in Tai Po as shown by the 30%-50% vacancy rate of similar developments in the area.

Road Capacity and Traffic Safety

62. Noting that the issue of traffic safety at Lo Fai Road had been raised by some representers at the session held on 18.12.2014, the Vice-chairman enquired whether an assessment on the road capacity and traffic safety had been carried out for the “GB” site at Lo Fai Road. Mr K.K. Ling, the Director of Planning, also enquired about the issue of illegal parking along Lo Fai Road, as raised by some representers. In response, Mr K.L. Wong (TD) said that Lo Fai Road was a single carriageway with a carrying capacity of 1,200-1,400 vehicles per hour. As the road was over 7.3m in width and was not frequented by heavy vehicles, it had a carrying capacity of 1,400 vehicles per hour. The road was expected to operate within its capacity even upon the completion of the future development at the “GB” site. A vehicle count had been conducted for Lo Fai Road during the morning peak hours and the results showed that the queuing problem was insignificant as all vehicles queuing at the traffic signal could pass through the junction at the green phase of the traffic signal. On the traffic safety issue, Mr Wong said that traffic safety would depend on the design of the road and several parameters would need to be considered including the vehicle speed allowed, distance, level and horizontal curvature of the road. One way to examine whether the design of the road was up to standard in terms of traffic safety was to check whether a particular section of the road was a traffic accident black spot. According to data over the last 15 years on traffic accidents along Lo Fai Road obtained from the Hong Kong Police, there was only an average of one traffic accident per year and the location of the traffic accidents were dispersed along the entire length of Lo Fai Road. In this regard, it could be concluded that the design of the road had met the traffic safety requirements as no traffic accident black spots were identified.

63. Ms Yvonne Lui (R2778), however, said that according to information provided earlier by Engineer/Tai Po (2), TD which was shown on the visualiser, the capacity of Lo Fai Road should be 1,100 vehicles per hour (550 vehicles for each direction) rather than 1,400 vehicles per hour as claimed by TD’s representative at the meeting. Based on three traffic counts conducted by the residents in 2014, the existing average outbound traffic during the morning peak was 307 vehicles per hour. This meant that out of a total of 834 housing units in the Lo Fai Road area, about 40% of households drove their car in the morning peak hour. With the addition of 660 flats in the future development, and assuming 40% of these households would drive their car, 243 vehicles would be added to

the morning peak so that the total outbound trips would reach 550 vehicles per hour or the maximum capacity of the road. These expected trip rates had not yet included the additional vehicle trips that would be generated by the proposed expansion of the HKIED and its primary school. In this regard, the rezoning of the “GB” site would result in traffic congestion along Lo Fai Road as the road would be operating beyond its capacity.

64. Ms Yvonne Lui (2778) continued to say that while the design of the road might be up to standard, traffic safety would also be affected by such factors as illegal parking and the pick-up/drop-off of children by school buses along the road. She pointed out that there were many traffic accidents along the road which had not been reported to the police as they were minor in nature. In this regard, the official traffic accident figure quoted by TD did not reflect the real situation.

[Mr Clarence W.C. Leung left the meeting at this point.]

Local Views

65. Dr Lau Chee Sing (R2925) said that being the District Councillor of the Lo Fai Road constituency, he needed to reflect the strong objection of the local people to the proposed rezoning of the “GB” site at Lo Fai Road. He also pointed out that the Tai Po District Council (TPDC) had considered in detail the proposed rezoning of the Lo Fai Road “GB” site and had unanimously passed a motion requesting PlanD and the Board to fully consider the dissenting views of TPDC and the residents and stakeholders on the rezoning of the site.

66. Ms Yvonne Lui (R2778) said that all the local stakeholders including the local residents, the TPDC, individual District Councillors, residents along Ting Kok Road, the staff of Nethersole Hospital, and the staff and students of HKIED objected to the proposed rezoning of “GB” sites. Adequate weighting should also be given to the local knowledge which had identified the brownfield site at Tung Tsz as a more appropriate site for development into residential use than the “GB” site at Lo Fai Road. Besides, the proposed development of the “GB” site at Lo Fai Road would adversely affect the view of a major attraction of Hong Kong – the Guanyin Statue.

Overall Impact of the Rezoning of “GB” Sites

67. Ms Yvonne Lui (R2778) said that according to information provided by the Government to the Legislative Council in January 2014, a total of 23 “GB” sites in Tai Po were planned to be rezoned for residential use, providing 27,600 flats accommodating about 100,000 persons. The Board should comprehensively consider the overall impact of the rezoning of these 23 sites on Tai Po instead of considering in a piecemeal manner the 6 “GB” sites that were presented by PlanD in the current exercise.

68. Mr Mo Ka Chun (R1133) said that as the current rezoning of the 6 “GB” sites in Tai Po would increase the population by about 30,000 persons, which was about 10% of the existing population, consideration should be given to the overall impact caused by the increase in population to traffic and the adequacy of community facilities to serve the future population. He noted that there was only one public library and one hospital in Tai Po and the area still lacked a city hall, an indoor swimming pool and public car parking spaces. He was also concerned that the “GB” sites proposed for rezoning would become isolated communities that lacked the necessary facilities to serve the future residents.

Other Views

69. Mr Steve Sau (R47) said that the Government had not addressed the impact on global warming which the proposed rezoning of the “GB” sites would cause. As trees were a natural agent for carbon capture, all deforestation should be stopped to enhance carbon capture and reduce global warming. However, no assessment had been conducted to examine the impact of the proposed development of over 200 ha of “GB” land on global warming. With over 800 ha of brownfield sites in Hong Kong, priority should be given to develop these brownfield sites rather than vegetated “GB” sites. Mr Sau was also concerned that the direct and indirect social costs arising from the destruction of vegetated “GB” sites including personal health, psychological health, public health expenses and impact on quality of life had not been adequately considered in the decision-making process. With over 50% of various species being made extinct in the last 50 years due to the destruction of their habitats, it was totally inappropriate to destroy “GB” sites on the

premise that these sites had low ecological value.

70. Mr Vincent Chu (R2789) said that at a Legislative Council meeting held in January 2011, the then Secretary for Development had made a commitment that the “GB” review exercise would only examine “GB” sites that were devegetated, deserted or formed. The Government should not be allowed to back away from its commitment and to change the criteria as it wished.

71. As Members had no further question to raise and the representers, commenters and their representatives had nothing to add, the Chairman said that the hearing procedure had been completed and the Board would deliberate on the representations in their absence at a separate meeting to be arranged. The representers would be informed of the Board’s decision in due course. The Chairman thanked the Government representatives, representers, commenters and their representatives for attending the meeting. They left the meeting at this point.

72. The meeting was adjourned at 1:40 p.m.