



羅迅測計師行
Lawson David & Sung
SURVEYORS LIMITED
Property Consultants • Planning • Valuers • Auctioneers
Estate Agency Licence No. C-006328

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Section 16 Planning Application

**Renewal of Planning Approval for Temporary Camping Ground
for Meditation Use for a Period of 3 Years at
Lots 1556(Part) and 1558 in D.D.114, Shek Kong, Yuen Long, New Territories**

Planning Statement

Applicant
Awareness Spiritual Growth Centre Limited

Prepared by
Lawson David and Sung Surveyors Limited

February 2025

Executive Summary

This planning application is submitted to the Town Planning Board (the “Board”) to seek renewal of planning approval for temporary camping ground for meditation use for a period of 3 years (the “Proposed Development”) at Lots 1556 (Part) and 1558 in D.D.114, Shek Kong, Yuen Long, N.T. (the “Application Site”).

The Application Site, with an area of about 5,059 sq.m., falls within an area zoned “Conservation Area” (“CA”) on the approved Shek Kong Outline Zoning Plan (OZP) No. S/YL-SK/9 gazetted on 27.10.2006. According to the Notes of the OZP, temporary use or development of any land or building not exceeding a period of three years requires planning permission of the Board.

The Application Site is the subject of eight previous planning applications (Nos. A/YL-SK/161, 165, 176, 197, 206, 213, 250 and 325) which were all approved by the Board for the same applied use. The last planning permission (Application No. A/YL-SK/325) was approved by the Board on 22.4.2022. All approval conditions of the previous applications had been complied with.

The current valid planning permission under Application No. A/YL-SK/325 will lapse on 22.4.2025. Given the Applicant has been using the Application Site in accordance with the terms approved by the Board, in particular the approval condition that no new fixture or structure was allowed to be placed/built on the site during the planning approval period had been complied with, the Applicant therefore submits this application for renewal of the current planning approval for a further period of 3 years to continue the existing temporary camping ground for meditation use.

There will be no change in nature of use and development parameters of the proposed development from the last application. The proposed development aims to provide a remote and quiet place for meditation. Within the natural and tranquil environment, participants of the proposed development will be able to train their mind through meditation practice, which is part of the Buddhist studies. There will also be no change in the proposed site layout, which covers a total occupied area of about 217.6 m², including 11 wooden boards for sitting and 3 concrete-based/wooden boards with decoration of Buddha statue, pagoda feature and plaque atop. The heights of these fixtures range from 0.37m to 2.5m.

The operation of the proposed development will be less than 10 meditation events per year. The meditation events will be held during the weekends of semesters. It will take about 1-2 days and some meditation participants will tent overnight at the Application Site. The tents used by the participants are canvas hiking tents that will only be set up during events and will be removed after events.

The justifications of this application are:

1. The proposed development conforms to the planning intention of the “CA” zone;
2. The Application Site is suitable for the applied use;
3. The proposed development is compatible with surrounding land uses;
4. The Application Site is subject to prior planning approvals granted for the same use; and
5. The proposed development will not generate any adverse traffic, environmental and sewage impacts on the surrounding areas.

In view of the above justifications presented in this planning statement, it is hoped that members of the Board and relevant Government departments will give favourable consideration to renew the planning approval for a period of 3 years.

行政摘要

此規劃報告書向城市規劃委員會(“城規會”)呈交，旨在支持在新界元朗石崗丈量約份第 114 約地段第 1556 號(部分)及第 1558 號(“申請地點”)，作為期三年的臨時營地作禪修用途(“擬議發展”)的規劃許可續期申請。

申請地點的面積約為 5,059 平方米，座落於在 2006 年 10 月 27 日刊憲的石崗分區計劃大綱核准圖(圖則編號：S/YL-SK/9)上的「自然保育區」地帶。根據該大綱圖的註釋，不超過三年土地或建築物的臨時用途或發展，須先向城規會提出申請。

申請地點涉及 8 宗同樣用途的規劃許可(申請編號：A/YL-SK/161, 165, 176, 197, 206, 213, 250 及 325)。最後一次申請(申請編號：A/YL-SK/325)於 2022 年 4 月 22 日獲城規會批准用作臨時營地作禪修用途。申請人亦已全部履行各規劃許可的附帶條件。

申請地點現時批給的規劃許可(申請編號：A/YL-SK/325)期限將於 2025 年 4 月 22 日屆滿。鑑於申請人一直按照城規會批准的條款使用申請地點，尤其在規劃許可期間不准搭建其他裝置物或任何構築物，並全部履行各項規劃許可附帶條件。申請人因此遞交是項規劃許可續期申請，以繼續現時臨時營地作禪修用途。

擬議發展的用途性質及發展參數與上次獲批申請相同。擬議發展將提供一個僻靜的場所供禪修用途，在大自然的環境中，參加者可透過禪修培育思維。擬議發展的佈局與上次申請相同，申請場地共放置 11 塊木板作禪修平台，3 個木製/混凝土裝置作放置佛教禪修裝飾物，這些裝置的總覆蓋面積約 217.6 平方米及高度約 0.37 米至 2.5 米。

每年在場地內舉行的禪修活動將會少於 10 次，每次大約 40 至 50 人。每次禪修活動均在週末舉行，活動會持續一至兩天。部份參加者會在申請地點內紮營露宿，帆布帳篷會在活動完結後拆除。

這宗申請的理據為：

1. 申請用途符合「自然保育區」地帶的規劃意向；
2. 申請地點適合用作申請用途；
3. 擬議發展與鄰近土地用途協調；
4. 申請地點之前獲相同臨時營地作禪修用途的規劃許可；及
5. 擬議發展不會對鄰近地方構成不良的交通、環境及排污影響。

基於本規劃報告書所述的理據，敬希 各城規會委員及有關政府部門能從優考慮這宗規劃續期申請。

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

1. INTRODUCTION 1
 1.1 Purpose
 1.2 Organization of the Planning Statement

2. SITE CONTEXT 1
 2.1 Location
 2.2 Existing Site Condition
 2.3 Surrounding Land Uses
 2.4 Land Status

3. PLANNING CONTEXT 2
 3.1 Outline Zoning Plan
 3.2 Previous Applications
 3.3 Similar Application

4. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL 3
 4.1 Renewal of Planning Approval
 4.2 Site Layout and Design
 4.3 Site Operation
 4.4 Landscape Proposal
 4.5 Environmental Consideration

5. PLANNING JUSTIFICATIONS 5
 5.1 Conforms to the Planning Intention of the “CA” Zone
 5.2 The Application Site is Suitable for Applied Use
 5.3 Compatible with Surrounding Land Uses
 5.4 Prior Planning Approvals Granted for the Same Use at the Application Site
 5.5 No Adverse Impacts on the Surrounding Areas

6. CONCLUSION 7

List of Figures

Figure 1 Location Plan
Figure 2 Lot Index Plan
Figure 3 Access to the Application Site
Figure 4 Indicative Layout Plan

Site Photos

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

Pursuant to Section 16 of the Town Planning Ordinance, this Planning Statement is submitted to the Town Planning Board (the “Board”) to seek renewal of planning approval for a temporary camping ground for meditation use (the “proposed development”) for a period of 3 years at Lots 1556(Part) and 1558 in D.D.114, Shek Kong, Yuen Long, New Territories (hereafter referred to as the “Application Site”). **Figure 1** shows the location of Application Site and the Lot Index Plan indicating the concerned lots is shown per **Figure 2**.

The Application Site, with a site area of about 5,059 sq.m., falls within an area zoned “Conservation Area” (“CA”) on the Approved Shek Kong Outline Zoning Plan (OZP) No. S/YL-SK/9 gazetted on 27.10.2006. According to the Notes of the OZP, temporary use or development of any land or building not exceeding a period of three years requires planning permission of the Board.

The Application Site, or part of it, is the subject of eight previously approved applications (Nos. A/YL-SK/161,165,176,197, 206, 213, 250 and 325) for temporary camping ground for meditation use. The last planning permission (Application No. A/YL-SK/325) was approved by the Board on 22.4.2022 and will be expired on 22.4.2025. The Application Site is currently being used by the Applicant as a camping ground to practice meditation for educational purpose.

The Applicant is a charitable organization under section 88 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance. Ven. Sik Hin Hung, being the Director of the Awareness Spiritual Growth Centre Limited (i.e. the Applicant), is a Founding Fellow and Senior Fellow of the Centre of Buddhist Studies of the University of Hong Kong. Ven. Sik would like to create a tranquil environment to allow secondary school / university students and followers to train their mind through meditation practice as part of the Buddhist studies, in which the Application Site is considered a suitable location with its remote and quiet environment.

Given the Applicant has been using the Application Site in accordance with the terms approved by the Board, in particular the approval condition that no new fixture or structure was allowed to be placed/built on the site during the planning approval period had been complied with, the Applicant hereby would like to seek for renewal of planning approval for a further period of 3 years. There will also be no change in the proposed site layout and nature of use from the last application.

1.2 Organization of the Planning Statement

This planning statement is divided into 6 chapters. Chapter 1 is an introduction outlining the above background of the planning application. Chapter 2 will then illustrate the site context and land status followed by Chapter 3 which describes the planning context in details. Chapter 4 gives the particulars of the proposed development. Detailed accounts of planning justifications of the proposed development are presented in Chapter 5. The planning statement finally concludes with a summary in Chapter 6.

2. Site Context

2.1 Location

The Application Site is located at the mid-hill level near Tai Lam Country Park (see **Figures 1 and 2**). It is accessible on foot only via a paved footpath along the catchwater access road and a natural trail leading from Route Twisk and Lui Kung Tin to its north (see **Figure 3**).

2.2 Existing Site Condition

The Application Site covers an area of about 5,059 sq.m. It is currently used as a camping ground for secondary school/university students and followers of the Applicant to practise meditation and is for education purpose (see **Site Photos**). The fixtures on site and current condition of the Application Site generally remain the same as fourteen years ago when the Board approved the previous planning application (No. A/YL-SK/161).

2.3 Surrounding Land Uses

The areas surrounding the Application Site are mainly rural in character with natural vegetation. The Application Site is surrounded by densely-vegetated woodlands. To the north in the "Residential (Group D)" zone is the settlements of Lui Kung Tin. To its south is Tai Lam Country Park.

2.4 Land Status

According to the records of Land Registry, the subject lots are held under Block Government Lease and demised for agricultural use with a lease term for 75 years, commenced from 1.7.1898, and are renewable for a further term of 24 years.

The Applicant is the land owner of the subject lots. A Short Term Waiver (STW) No. 4489 was granted by the Lands Department to permit the temporary structures for the purpose of temporary camping ground for meditation use.

3. Planning Context

3.1 Outline Zoning Plan

The Application Site falls within an area zoned "Conservation Area" ("CA") zone on the Approved Shek Kong Outline Zoning Plan (OZP) No. S/YL-SK/9 gazetted on 27.10.2006 (see **Figure 1**). The planning intention of the "CA" zone is "to protect and retain the existing natural landscape, ecological or topographical features of the area for conservation, educational and research purposes and to separate sensitive natural environment such as Country Park from the adverse effects of development."

According to the Notes of the OZP, temporary use or development of any land or building not exceeding a period of three years requires planning permission of the Board.

3.2 Previous Applications

The Application Site, or part of it, is the subject of 8 previously approved planning applications as summarized in the table below:-

Application No.	Applied Use	Decision	Date of Approval
A/YL-SK/161	Temporary Camping Ground for Meditation Use for a Period of 3 Years	Approved with conditions for 1 year	26.11.2010
A/YL-SK/165	Renewal of Planning Approval for Temporary Camping Ground for Meditation Use for a Period of 1 Year	Approved with conditions for 1 year	18.11.2011
A/YL-SK/176	Renewal of Planning Approval for Temporary Camping Ground for Meditation Use for a Period of 1 Year	Approved with conditions for 1 year	9.11.2012

A/YL-SK/197	Renewal of Planning Approval for Temporary Camping Ground for Meditation Use for a Period of 1 Year	Approved with conditions for 1 year	28.3.2014
A/YL-SK/206	Renewal of Planning Approval for Temporary Camping Ground for Meditation Use for a Period of 1 Year	Approved with conditions for 1 year	27.3.2015
A/YL-SK/213	Temporary Camping Ground for Meditation Use for a Period of 3 Years	Approved with conditions for 3 years	22.4.2016
A/YL-SK/250	Renewal of Planning Approval for Temporary Camping Ground for Meditation Use for a Period of 3 Years	Approved with conditions for 3 years	12.4.2019
A/YL-SK/325	Renewal of Planning Approval for Temporary Camping Ground for Meditation Use for a Period of 3 Years	Approved with conditions for 3 years	22.4.2022

All approval conditions of the last application (No. A/YL-SK/325), as listed below, are always complied with within the approval period:-

- (a) No new fixture or structure is allowed to be placed/built on the Application Site;
- (b) No trees within the Application Site are allowed to be interfered with by any means, felled or topped at any time;
- (c) No open burning is allowed on the Application Site at any time;
- (d) No chemicals, including fertilizers and pesticides, are allowed to be used or stored on the Application Site at any time;
- (e) No public announcement system, portable loudspeaker or any form of audio amplification system is allowed to be used on the Application Site at any time; and
- (f) The existing trees and landscape plantings on the Application Site shall be maintained at all time.

3.3 Similar Application

There is no similar application within the same "CA" zone under the Shek Kong OZP.

4. Development Proposal

4.1 Renewal of Planning Approval

The Applicant seeks renewal of planning approval to use the Application Site for temporary camping ground for meditation use for a period of 3 years. The proposed development is to provide a camping ground for secondary school/university students and followers of the Applicant to practice meditation and is for education purpose.

4.2 Site Layout and Design

There would be no changes in the nature of the use and the proposed site layout (see **Figure 4**) from the last application (No. A/YL-SK/325), in which 14 fixtures, with a total occupied area of about 217.6 sq.m. and heights ranging from 0.37m to 2.5m, are placed within the site. The fixtures consist of 11 wooden boards that serve as meditation seating, and 3 concrete-based/wooden board fixtures with Buddhist meditation decorations atop (including a Buddha statue, a pagoda feature and a plaque).

4.3 Site Operation

The operation of the applied use will be the same as the previous applications, in which less than 10 meditation events will be held at the Application Site per year. For each meditation event, there will be only about 40-50 participants. The meditation event will normally be conducted during weekends of semesters. It will last for about 1-2 days and some meditation participants will tent overnight at the Application Site. The tents used by the participants are canvas hiking tents that will only be set up during events and will be removed after events.

During meditation events, the participants will train their mind through meditation practice. No loudspeaker will be used in any of the events. The participants will occasionally chat during meditation. There will be no open burning on the Application Site. To keep the Application Site tidy, the participants will not eat or cook at the Application Site. They will bring their own food and eat at the public barbecue sites nearby, where rubbish bins and toilets are available. Participants will be in casual wear such as T-shirt or sportswear.

The participants will take public transport and alight at Route Twist and then walk to the Application Site. The Application Site is screened off by trees on adjoining Government land and there is no signage locating the Application Site.

4.4 Landscape Proposal

The Applicant had complied with the approval condition (f) of submission and implementation of landscape and tree preservation proposals of the previous application (No. A/YL-SK/206), in which 70 nos. of seedling of species *Sterculia lanceolata* had been provided for compensation of 19 nos. of dead trees at the Application Site. The Applicant will continue the maintenance of the existing trees and landscape plantings at all times.

4.5 Environmental Consideration

The nature of the proposed development is for passive educational meditation use only. To mitigate the possible environmental nuisance, the Applicant will continue implementing the following mitigation measures from the previous planning approvals:-

- (a) No new fixture or structure is allowed to be placed/built on the Application Site;
- (b) No trees within the Application Site are allowed to be interfered with by any means, felled or topped at any time;
- (c) No open burning is allowed on the Application Site at any time;
- (d) No chemicals, including fertilizers and pesticides, are allowed to be used or stored on the Application Site at any time;
- (e) No public announcement system, portable loudspeaker or any form of audio amplification system is allowed to be used on the Application Site at any time;
- (f) The existing trees and landscape plantings on the Application Site shall be maintained at all times; and
- (g) No new access road, sewers, sewage treatment facilities, earthworks and other building works will be involved in this application.

5. Planning Justifications

5.1 Conforms to the Planning Intention of the “CA” Zone

The Application Site falls within an area zoned “CA” on the Shek Kong OZP No. S/YL-SK/9. The proposed development is considered in line with the planning intention of the “CA” zone, in particular, of protecting and retaining the existing natural landscape, ecological or topographical features of the area for conservation, educational and research purposes. The proposed development will be solely used as a camping ground for meditation which will only be held in less than 10 events per year. As the Applicant will help maintain the existing landscape in compliance of the approval conditions of all previous planning approvals, the proposed development is indeed complementing the planning intention of the “CA” zone of protecting and retaining the existing natural landscape, ecological or topographical features of the area.

In addition, all the fixtures on the Application Site are temporary in nature, which only occupied about 4.3% of the Application Site, so as to safeguard the natural landscape and maintain the serenity of the area. Owing to no permanent buildings/structures will be erected on the Application Site and the temporary nature of applied use, the proposed development is in line with the planning intention of the “CA” zone.

5.2 The Application Site is Suitable for the Applied Use

The Application Site is located at an inconspicuous location being screened off from the surrounding areas by dense woodland. As mentioned in para. 4.3., the applied use is held infrequently (i.e. less than 10 meditation events annually) and therefore the interference to the existing landscape character is minimal. Since the site is not identified as a site of ecological importance, the Application Site is considered suitable for camping ground use.

5.3 Compatible with Surrounding Land Uses

The purpose of the proposed development is to provide a place for meditation and it is of educational purpose. The Application Site has been in use for the proposed development and co-existed with the surrounding land uses since the first planning approval in 2010. With the ongoing maintenance of the existing trees and landscape plantings, as well as the conservation of existing natural landscape resources by the Applicant, it is not considered incompatible with the rural and tranquil character of its surrounding woodland environment. Furthermore, the proposed development will help maintain a harmonious rural environment by preserving and reinforcing the natural landscape of the area.

5.4 Prior Planning Approvals Granted for the Same Use at the Application Site

The Application Site is the subject of 8 previous planning approvals for the same camping ground use since 2010. The last approved application (No. A/YL-SK/325) for temporary camping ground was approved by the Board on 22.4.2022 with all approval conditions complied with. There is no change in the nature of use and proposed site layout from the last application. In view of the fact that the Applicant had complied with all the approval conditions of the previous approvals, the Applicant believes that they will continue using the site in accordance with the terms and conditions as imposed by the Board. The renewal of the planning approval for the proposed development is therefore considered acceptable within the subject “CA” zone and in line with the previous decision of the Board.

5.5 No Adverse Impacts on the Surrounding Areas

Owing to the nature of the proposed development, no adverse traffic, environmental and sewerage impacts are anticipated on the surrounding areas, as discussed below:

Traffic

The Application Site is accessible on foot only. The participants will take public transport, alight at Route Twisk and then walk to the Application Site. Considering that there is no vehicular access to the Application Site, the traffic induced by the proposed development will be minimal. Therefore, the proposed development would not have significant traffic impact to the surrounding areas.

Environmental

Due to the infrequent event schedule, the proposed development would not generate adverse environmental impact on the area. All temporary structures are only for sitting during meditation events. The visual impact of the proposed development would also be minimized to the surrounding area given that the site is screened off by woodland on the adjoining Government land. No loudspeaker/amplification system will be used, the potential noise impact caused by the proposed development will be minimal. Therefore, the proposed development will not generate any adverse visual and noise impacts to the surrounding areas.

Sewerage

Participants of the proposed development will not eat or cook at the Application Site and they will only eat at the nearby public barbecue areas where rubbish bins and toilets are available. Therefore, no sewerage will be discharged from the Application Site.

6. Conclusion

The Application Site falls within “CA” zone on the Approved Shek Kong OZP No. S/YL-SK/9. The last application of the Application Site (No. A/YL-SK/325) for the same camping ground for meditation use was approved by the Board on 22.4.2022.

The Application Site is the subject of 8 planning approvals for the same camping ground use and the Applicant has complied with all the approval conditions of the last application (No. A/YL-SK/325). The Applicant submits this application to renew the current planning approval to continue the current usage of camping ground for secondary/university students and the followers of the Applicant to practice meditation as part of the Buddhist studies. There will be no change in the nature of use and development parameters from the last application.

The Application Site is considered suitable for the proposed development given its inconspicuous location being screened off from the surroundings by dense woodland. Meanwhile, the Applicant will also maintain and conserve the existing natural landscape, which will help maintain the harmonious rural environment. The proposed development, which has taken place since 2010 with prior planning approvals, is therefore considered compatible with the surrounding land uses.

Additionally, the Applicant has been using the Application Site in accordance with the terms approved by the Board in the past for protecting and retaining the existing natural landscape, ecological or topographical features of the area. Given the temporary nature and infrequent usage of the proposed development, it will not jeopardize the long-term planning intention of the “CA” zone. Since the proposed development is for passive educational use only, no adverse traffic, environmental and sewerage impacts are anticipated on the surrounding areas.

In view of the justifications stated herein, we sincerely hope that the Board will give favourable consideration to renew the planning permission of this application for a period of 3 years.

Lawson David & Sung Surveyors Limited
February 2025