

LegCo Panel on Planning, Lands and Works, 25 January 2006

HKCA Submission on “Kai Tak Planning Review”

Introduction

Thank you for giving the Hong Kong Construction Association (HKCA) the opportunity to give views on this matter. The Kai Tak Development area is the single largest remaining parcel of undeveloped land, with a total area of 328 hectares, in the urban district. It is therefore very important that proper and balanced planning is exercised in its development. The fact that it also possesses a long coastline facing the beautiful inner Victoria Harbour makes the piece of land even more prestigious.

We recall that studies for the South East Kowloon development has been carried out back in 1993 and 1998, with Outline Zoning Plans released in 1999, 2001 and 2005. The Kai Tak site has been vacant for over 7 years since the airport was relocated. It is time for us to decide and redevelop it into other meaningful uses rather than letting it remain idle wastefully. In any case, HKCA urges that design and construction should commence immediately once consensus on the Concept Plans is reached.

Outline Concept Plans

We note that there are 3 Outline Concept Plans proposed based on different population densities and land use proportions. HKCA has no special preference towards any particular plan. Our concern is rather on the sustainability in terms of a balanced long-term housing supply, recreational facilities, creation of business and employment opportunities; and the environmental impacts associated with the future developments.

Whichever plan is finally adopted, the detail layout of the building blocks and facilities must emphasize on the environmental effects in addition to enhancing the scenic views of the Harbour and preserving the prominent ridgeline. A comprehensive micro-climate study should be conducted to ensure future high-rise developments will not have undue effects and worsen the air quality of Hong Kong by blocking cross flows and wind movements.

HKCA is also with the view that the development be planned and phased in such a way that a sustainable and steady supply is spreaded evenly over the period. A steady workload will be more beneficial overall to the community as well as the real estate and construction market.

Metro Park, Waterfront Promenade and Open Space

A Metro Park of 14 hectares is proposed in Plans 1 and 2; and 24 hectares is proposed in Plans 3. We commend the proposal as it represents a green; leisure area equivalent to 4/5th or 1.4 times of Hong Kong Victoria Park will be available to the future residents and public. With the 50m wide harbourfront promenade and other open spaces, over 30% of the total area is proposed for leisure and recreational use.

We understand the complete development will take place in phases and span over a lengthy period. However, we would urge to commence construction of the waterfront promenade the soonest for the early enjoyment by the public. It can also serve as an ideal place for holding cultural activities in the southeast Kowloon area. Short-term lease to organisations for carnivals, performances or leisure activities could also be considered while the public and tourists enjoy our beautiful harbour view.

Kai Tak Approach Channel

We consider the 3 Outline Concept Plans proposed based on “no reclamation” scenarios is a logical and sensible approach as the starting point. Mitigation measures of a 600m wide opening at the runway to improve water circulation and sediment treatment to remove odour are proposed. However, as indicated in the preliminary technical assessments, the water body could only be retained for amenity purpose after such measures and not meeting water-based recreational activities water quality standards. Therefore the effectiveness of the mitigation measures must be fully studied and the future implementation costs evaluated. Due consideration must be taken that we will not create another environmental problem in treatment / removal of the polluted sediments in stirring up the pollutant; nor there will be a heavy recurrent cost burden to the community for maintaining the long-term mitigation measures.

These concerns and findings must be made known to the public so that we could all evaluate the pros and cons of the “no reclamation” and “reclamation” alternatives in terms of environmental friendliness and cost effectiveness. Therefore we should be open-minded in considering this issue and not to preclude any possible options.

Multi-purpose Stadium

HKCA supports the construction of a multi-purpose stadium with 50,000 seats and ancillary facilities, which will definitely support the long-term sports development in Hong Kong. In the first place Hong Kong, as a world-class city, lacks such facilities and thus the capability to host international sports functions that will benefit the tourist industry in addition to our sports development. We understand

there are concerns that the huge number of audience attending functions would exert great pressure on the transport infrastructure in the neighbouring area. However, this could be resolved by proper planning of infrastructure and mass transportation facilities.

A simple search revealed that there are 47 stadiums in Europe with seating capacity over 50,000; 14 in China; 6 in Japan, 4 in Korea; 1 each in Singapore and Thailand. All these can offer valuable experiences and examples to address the crowd movement issue. We note that the future To Kwa Wan station of the Shatin to Central Link is in the vicinity of the stadium complex; therefore early completion of the Shatin to Central Link could ease the concern.

Cruise Terminal

We understand that there are a lot of controversial opinions on the site location for the cruise terminal and HKCA is neutral on this. However, we are supportive and agree that there is a genuine need of having additional docking facilities to cater for the growth in the cruise and tourism industry. It would be very inconvenient to the tourists and would exert additional pressure to our already over-congested container terminal if more and more ships calling in Hong Kong have to dock at Kwai Chung.