

**Response to major issues raised by deputations at the
special meeting of the Panel on 17 December 2005**

A. Justifications for the construction of a new Central Government Complex (CGC) and a new Legislative Council Complex (LCC)

The proposed Central Government Complex is necessary to address the acute shortage problem facing the Government Secretariat. The Central Government Offices (CGO) and Murray Building (MB) have been underprovided in terms of office accommodation and supporting facilities. The Government has to pay high rentals for office spaces in other commercial buildings.

The maintenance costs of the CGO buildings and MB are around \$30 million per annum. Refurbishment of the CGO buildings and MB for conversion into technologically advanced modern offices is not cost-effective. The buildings are old and it is costly to overcome the technical difficulties due to their structural and other limitations. Substantial structural strengthening would be required for construction of additional floors and/or heavy plants and equipments. Also, the large-scale renovation and/or construction works would necessitate interim reprovisioning of offices and seriously interrupt the smooth operation of the Government Secretariat.

The number of staff to be relocated to Tamar would be kept to the minimum and limited to those of policy bureaux or relevant offices performing policy-making functions. Along this principle, the new Central Government Complex (CGC) would house, as shown from the estimates submitted to the Legislative Council (LegCo) in 2003, some 3 200 staff.

Implementation of the Tamar project would address the office shortage problem long faced by the Government Secretariat, and give relief to the construction sector hard hit by high unemployment rate. The Tamar site was formed in 1997 long before commencement of the CRIII project, and has been left idle since. Sites adjoining to Tamar have well been developed, it would be at high cost to leave the Tamar site idle for any longer.

As undertaken before, we aim to provide more updated information on the development project such as the detailed user requirements, in the second quarter of 2006 when seeking funding approval from the LegCo.

B. Choice of the Tamar site for development of a new CGC and LCC

Pursuant to the public consultation process and other statutory procedures instituted under the Town Planning Ordinance (TPO), the existing uses of the Tamar site, i.e. half of the site for “Government, Institution or Community” (G/IC) use and the remaining half for “Open Space” use, have been approved in 2000.

The Tamar development fulfills the long-term interest of the public and enables vibrancy at the waterfront by designating half of the site as “Open Space” use for development into a civic place for public enjoyment. It also meets the long-term planning objective of developing the area into a prime civic core by including the new CGC, LegCo Complex and civic place as core development components.

C. Public consultation on the Tamar development project

The existing zoning and land uses of the Tamar site have duly gone through the statutory public consultation and planning process since 1998 before its approval in 2000 upon the recommendation of the Town Planning Board (TPB). It is clearly stated in the explanatory statement of the approved Outline Zoning Plan (OZP) that the Tamar site is reserved for the development of CGC and LegCo Complex.

The Government also consulted the LegCo Panel on Planning, Lands and Works and the Public Works Subcommittee (PWSC) on the Tamar project in April 2003 and May 2003 respectively. Both the Panel and the PWSC tendered support.

D. Height restriction on the Tamar development project

Notwithstanding the height restriction being set under the relevant OZP at 180 metres PD, we have decided to reduce and cap the height of the buildings to be developed on the Tamar site to 130 metres PD – 160 metres PD, to ensure a 20% building-free zone under the ridgeline. This would help preserve as much open view as possible to the ridgeline and the harbour.

In addition to height reduction, the Tamar project would also take into account the Harbour Planning Principles. Special emphasis would also be given to ensuring incorporation of environmentally-friendly considerations into the project. We will include energy-efficient features and renewable energy technologies in compliance with the latest Government guidelines as design requirements for the project.

E. Design-and build approach

Apart from the need to minimize the interface problem between the design and construction of the project and the need to achieve early implementation, the Government also attaches great importance to the design of the Tamar development. Taking into account these objectives, we have proposed to adopt a design-and-build (D&B) approach. To particularly address the public aspiration to have a quality design for this important landmark project, we have exceptionally included “design capability” as one of the assessment criteria in prequalifying applicants, in order to achieve a good balance in assessing their technical, financial, managerial and design capabilities.

From the experience of the previous prequalification exercise in 2003, the D&B approach is proven to be effective in attracting both internationally and locally renowned architects for the project.

F. Land-use planning for the Central waterfront

The approved Central District (Extension) OZP

The land-use planning of the Central District (Extension) OZP was drawn up in accordance with statutory procedures and has gone through several rounds of public consultations. In planning for the new Central waterfront, we are particularly mindful of the value of Hong Kong Harbour and the need to preserve this natural heritage. We have accordingly placed greater emphasis on providing a spacious, easily accessible promenade with good connectivity with the adjoining areas and the hinterland where community can freely walk, rest and enjoy. The current OZP has reflected these planning intentions while allowing optimized use of the reclaimed land to meet the long-term economic and social needs of Hong Kong.

The TPB has recently re-examined and re-affirmed these planning intentions arising from three rezoning requests and decided that the land use zonings on the OZP are appropriate. The TPB accepted however that it will be useful to set out the planning objectives clearly through the preparation of planning/design briefs using the urban design framework for the waterfront. This will guide future developments and ensure that only proposals which can demonstrate compatibility with the waterfront setting, facilitation of pedestrian access, and promotion of visual permeability will be approved by the TPB. To take forward the TPB's decision, Planning Department will prepare planning/design briefs for the Central waterfront area, in particular the proposed groundscraper at the "Comprehensive Development Area" ("CDA") site and the sites for waterfront related commercial and leisure uses.

Sustainability of the current planning in traffic terms

According to the information submitted by Transport Department to the Expert Panel on Sustainable Transport Planning and Central-Wan Chai Bypass (the Expert Panel) in August 2005, the 9 sites in the Central reclamation areas would attract and generate traffic trips of 2,360 and 1,700 private car unit per hour respectively during AM

peak hour. Transport Department's submission to the Expert Panel indicates that the Central-Wan Chai Bypass (CWB) would operate at a volume to capacity ratio of about 0.7 by 2016, which means that the CWB would have sufficient capacity to cope with the volume of vehicular traffic under consideration and the resultant traffic would flow smoothly.

The planned developments arising from the Central (Extension) OZP will not over-burden the total capacity of the three existing cross-harbour tunnels as the Western Harbour Crossing is not yet operated to full/planned capacity. The Government is actively exploring the feasibility of toll adjustment options that can achieve a more balanced distribution of traffic among the three cross-harbour tunnels. Any option pursued must meet the criteria of bringing overall benefits to the public, alleviating traffic congestion on the tunnels and congestion at the adjacent strategic roads and junctions, and fairness to taxpayers. The implementation of this measure is subject to agreement of the franchisees of the Western Harbour Crossing and Eastern Harbour Crossing.

All planned developments mentioned by the deputations and other planned re-developments in Central which have gone through the statutory planning procedures have been taken into account in the traffic forecast model.

Roadway provision

The section of the proposed CWB within the boundary of the Central Reclamation Phase III (CRIII) project will be built in the form of a tunnel which will minimise environmental impacts on the proposed open spaces in the area. The construction of the CWB will follow the statutory requirements of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Ordinance, including implementation of mitigation measures, to address environmental concerns.

Road P2 will be a dual 2-lane distributor road with additional turning pockets in front of road junctions to enhance the junction performance. There will be at-grade crossings along Road P2 in

Central reclamation areas to allow pedestrian walking from the hinterland to the waterfront. In addition, the future Road P2 fronting the Tamar site will be built in the form of an underpass. There will be direct at-grade pedestrian access from the waterfront promenade to the civic place of the Tamar site over an open deck of about 50m-60m wide above the depressed section of Road P2.

G. Comprehensive and updated environmental impact assessments for the Tamar development project and the planned developments in Central

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report of the CRIII project was approved under the EIA Ordinance in August 2001. No updating is required under the Ordinance once approval is given.

As for the Tamar project, it is of office-type development and thus not a “designated project” subject to an EIA prescribed under the EIA Ordinance. Notwithstanding, environmental control and mitigation measures would be adopted during the construction stage and when the development is in operation, and no adverse long-term environmental impacts would be caused by the project.

According to the latest estimate in 2005, the traffic generated from the Tamar site (CGC and LegCo Complex) would be less than 3% of the total traffic flow of the Central Business District. The 3% is calculated on the basis of the highest permissible development intensity of the site, and should be significantly lower in actuality as the Government is committed to reducing the development intensity of the Tamar project.

H. Planning principles and mechanism

The Government has all along adopted an integrated land use and transport planning approach. It is already the current practice that appropriate land use zonings and development restrictions would be designated/imposed on the relevant OZPs taking into account traffic constraints, together with other planning considerations including the character of the area and other infrastructural constraints.

The question of whether to set up a specific statutory body, such as expanding the proposed statutory body for the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) project to a harbour agency, should be carefully considered taking into account the experience of the proposed establishment of a statutory body for the WKCD project.