

Panel on Planning, Lands and Works

Subcommittee to Review the Planning for the Central Waterfront (including the Tamar Site)

Questions and requests for information raised at the meeting on 9 February 2006 requiring the Administration's follow-up actions

- (a) information and reports requested in the following motion passed at the meeting –

“That this Subcommittee urges the Government to provide the Subcommittee with all the original reports or information on the feasibility studies relating to the provision of a new central government complex and the extension or reconstruction of the existing central government offices, including details of the following: assessments of the various policy bureaux’ needs for office space, merit and demerit assessments of the identified sites, traffic impact assessments, environmental impact assessments, and so on.”;

At Appendix I is a list of major documents regarding the decision to develop the proposed Central Government Complex and Legislative Council Complex at Tamar. It would facilitate Members’ understanding of the Government’s preparatory work and major analyses at different stages of the planning and decision making process. We have provided documents that are directly relevant to the decision to pursue the Tamar development project. However, some of the data and information contained in the documents may be outdated given the time lapse.

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2. Before the Government announced the intention to reserve the site for development of a new Central Government Complex in January 1998, the Government had explored a number of site options including the Tamar site. As other site options were subject to different constraints, the Administration decided to explore in greater detail the feasibility of the Tamar site option.

3. Since January 1998, the Administration undertook studies on the feasibility of the Tamar site, including ground investigation, as well as assessment of the traffic and environmental implications. The general conclusion of the preliminary assessment conducted in 1998 was that the traffic impact would be acceptable. The preliminary environmental review (PER) in 1998 also confirmed that the Tamar project would not cause long-term adverse environmental impacts.

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4. Having gone through the extensive public consultation and due process under the Town Planning Ordinance, half of the Tamar site was rezoned to “Open Space” use and the remaining half to “Government, Institution or Community” use in 2000. In the same year, the Government reviewed the Tamar site option against the option of in-situ redevelopment, and came to the view that the Tamar site was a better choice. Interim decantation and reprovisioning would be necessary but difficult under the option of in-situ redevelopment. It would seriously affect the smooth operation of the Government Secretariat.

5. Following the Executive Council’s decision that the Administration should proceed to develop the Tamar site for the new Central Government Complex together with a new LegCo building, we issued a Legislative Council (LegCo) brief on 30 April 2002. The brief sets out the justifications for the project and the merits of the Tamar site option vis-à-vis the in-situ redevelopment option. We subsequently briefed the LegCo Panel on Planning, Lands and Works (PLW Panel) on the details of the Tamar project. We also maintained liaison with the LegCo Commission on the requirements of the new LegCo Complex. In April and May 2003, the Administration consulted the PLW Panel and the Public Works Subcommittee on the funding support for the Tamar project, and both tendered support. However, before the Finance Committee considered the funding application, the Administration decided to conduct a 6-month review of the project against the impacts of the SARS outbreak on the public finances. The project was eventually shelved in November 2003.

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6. In October 2005, the Chief Executive announced the re-launch of the Tamar project. In view of the prevailing community concerns over development intensity at the waterfront and protection of the ridgeline, the Administration has decided to excise the Exhibition Gallery originally proposed from the scope of the Tamar project. We have also tightened the height restrictions for developments on the Tamar site from 180 meter PD to 130 – 160 meter PD to help preserve as much open view as possible to the ridgeline and the harbour.

7. The traffic impact assessment of the Tamar project was updated by the Transport Department in the third quarter of 2005. It was considered that the traffic flow to be generated by the Tamar project would not have significant impact on the total traffic flow of the Central Business District.

(b) a detailed breakdown of the planned area provisions for the offices and facilities and the number of staff to be accommodated in the proposed new Central Government Complex;

8. We are updating the user requirements of the new Central Government Complex. Breakdown of the area required for the offices and facilities will be available upon completion of the updating exercise in the second quarter of 2006, before we seek funding approval for the project from the Legislative Council. In the meantime, information provided to the Public Works Subcommittee in May 2003 is set out below for reference :-

	Facilities	Area required in the new CGC (m²) (Net Operating Floor Area)
1.	Chief Executive's Office	1 566
2.	Executive Council and its Secretariat	1188
3.	Chief Secretary for Administration's and Financial Secretary's Offices, including Administration Wing and other offices (including Central Policy Unit, Efficiency Unit, Protocol, Secretariat Press Office etc.)	7 433

4.	Offices of 11 Bureaux	47 952
5.	Communal and ancillary facilities (including multi-purpose hall, press rooms, conference rooms, function hall, dining room and building management offices, etc.)	7 892
	<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>66 031</i>
	<i>Allowance for expansion (5%)</i>	<i>3 302</i>
	<i>Total</i>	<i>69 333*</i>

- (c) a detailed breakdown of the area provisions for the offices and the facilities and the number of staff currently accommodated in Central Government Offices (CGO) and the Murray Building (MB);

9. The number of staff currently accommodated in the CGO and MB is 1 870 and 1 130 respectively. At **Appendix II** is a breakdown of the area provisions for the offices and ancillary facilities.

- (d) whether any bureaux/departments/units that are currently not accommodated in CGO and Murray Building will be accommodated in the proposed new CGC;

10. Due to shortage of space in the CGO/MB, some bureaux have offices/units accommodated in other Government buildings and/or commercial premises. Examples include Home Affairs Bureau (currently with offices in Southorn Centre, Wanchai), Education and Manpower Bureau (currently with offices in Wu Chung House, Wanchai) and Commerce, Industry and Technology Bureau (currently with offices in One Pacific Place). Our plan is to rationalise the present situation. However, we will only relocate those out-stationed offices/units which are performing policy-making functions to the new Central Government Complex.

* The area is expressed in terms of NOFA and not Gross Floor Area (GFA). An NOFA of 69,333m² is equivalent to a GFA of 110,030 m².

(e) explanation on why more space is needed in the proposed CGC when the number of civil servants have been on the decrease;

11. Although the total number of civil servants in Hong Kong has been decreasing, the number of staff of the Government Secretariat only occupies a small portion of the Government's staff establishment. The scope of policy portfolios and services provided by the Government Secretariat has remained relatively stable with modest improvements in the past few years. Bureaux will continue to exercise stringent control of their establishment. Pending their required updating of user requirements with detailed justifications, we do not expect major increase in the staffing level for the new CGC by the target completion date of 2010.

12. The area of the new Central Government Complex will take into account the space requirements of the staff as well as communal ancillary facilities. Upon completion of the updating exercise, the latest estimates on the number of staff and the area of accommodation required will be available.

13. The CGO and MB are currently underprovided in terms of office accommodation and ancillary facilities. We shall rationalise the shortfall and enhance provision of ancillary facilities (e.g. pressrooms) in the new Central Government Complex, to meet operational needs. Moreover, we will also need to take account of those staff/offices of out-stationed bureaux that are justified to move into the new Central Government Complex.

(f) the document with the relevant analysis based on which the Administration has arrived at the conclusion that building a new CGC at Tamar will allow at least four years of earlier completion than in-situ redevelopment of CGO and Murray Building sites;

14. The Government's ad hoc internal estimate is that building a new CGC at Tamar could be completed four years earlier than in-situ redevelopment of CGO buildings and Murray Building. Assuming a phased approach, demolition and redevelopment of the Murray Building would take some 45 months, and the demolition and redevelopment of the CGO buildings would take another 45 months. As the estimated time for the Tamar project is around 42 months, the in-situ redevelopment option

would cause a some 4-year delay for reprovisioning of the Government headquarters. The required decantation and interim reprovisioning of the Government Secretariat involving over 3,000 staff would present a difficult problem.

- (g) explanation on why it is considered not feasible or too expensive to redevelop/renovate/expand the CGO and Murray Building to produce a technologically advanced working environment, and what advanced technologies are involved in this regard;**

15. Whilst the details of the technological provisions in the new Central Government Complex are yet to be finalised, we intend to put in place technologically-advanced facilities of modern standards to cater for both the present day needs and future developments. The new technological facilities will likely include expandable and new information technology/telecommunications network facilities, as well as network management systems, advanced electronic and security installations, efficient electrical, mechanical and building services systems, etc.

16. If we were to install similar facilities in the existing CGO buildings and Murray Building, massive renovation works such as structural improvement works would have to be carried out, together with the realignment and redistribution of the various systems. These renovation works would not only incur high costs, but also interrupt the operation of the Government Secretariat. Moreover, renovation of the existing buildings would not be able to address the acute office space shortage problem long faced by the Government Secretariat, as well as the LegCo, even if the technical constraints can be overcome.

- (h) a breakdown of the types of jobs, with the respective durations that will be created by the Tamar development project;**

17. It is expected that the Tamar project will create 2 720 job opportunities for the construction industry, namely 2 450 for labourers, 80 for professionals and 190 for technical and ancillary staff throughout the development period. The total man-months amount to 73 000.

- (i) whether the same number of jobs would be created if the proposed CGC is to be constructed at another location or if the existing CGO and Murray Building are to be redeveloped/renovated/expanded;

18. The number of employment opportunities to be created would depend on the estimated construction cost and contract duration of the various options. As in-situ redevelopment would need to take place in phases and all site options, including the in-situ option, would require new feasibility study and some rezoning process, there would be delay in project commencement as compared with the Tamar development project and hence serious delay in providing timely relief to the construction sector which has been hard hit by unemployment.

- (j) updated assessment of the air quality impact of the Tamar development project; and

19. The Tamar project is an office-type development with associated open space, amenity, footbridges, etc. within a commercial/urban environment. Such type of development will not cause long-term adverse environmental impacts and hence not among the “Designated Projects” under the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Ordinance required to conduct EIA.

20. Notwithstanding, the Administration conducted a preliminary environmental review (PER) in 1998 to assess the environmental implications of the Tamar project. It was confirmed that there would be no long-term adverse environmental impacts arising from the proposed Tamar development project.

21. The Government will undertake environmental control and mitigation measures to ensure least environmental impacts during the construction and operation stages.

- (k) whether there have been any public consultations conducted specifically on the Tamar development project, and if so, what organizations or groups were consulted and when the relevant consultations were made.

22. The relevant draft Central District (Extension) Outline Zoning Plan (OZP), which proposed half of the Tamar development site be designated for “Open Space” use and the other half for development of the new Central Government Complex, was exhibited for public inspection for 2 months in 1998 under section 5 of the Town Planning Ordinance. During the public inspection period, 70 valid objections were received but none was targeted at the proposed use of the Tamar development site. In parallel, the Administration also consulted various bodies, to gauge their views and to explain to them the proposed uses of the sites under the draft Central District (Extension) OZP.

23. After the Government announced the decision on the Tamar development project in April 2002, we also conducted briefings and consultations on the project. The consultation programme is as follows: -

29.5.1998	The draft Central District (Extension) OZP No. S/H24/1 was exhibited for public inspection under section 5 of the Town Planning Ordinance (TPO). Half of the Tamar development site was proposed to be zoned for “Open Space” use, and the remaining for “Government, Institution or Community” (“G/IC”) use.
June/July 1998	Briefing sessions with the Hong Kong Institute of Planners, Hong Kong Institution of Engineers, Liberal Party, Democratic Alliance for Betterment of Hong Kong, and Democratic Party on the draft OZP No. S/H24/1.
18.6.1998	Consultation with the then Central & Western Provisional District Board (PDB) on the draft OZP No. S/H24/1.
7.7.1998	Consultation with the Standing Committee of the then Provisional Urban Council on the draft OZP No. S/H24/1.
15.7.1998	Consultation with the Planning Sub-Committee of the Land and Building Advisory Committee on the draft OZP No. S/H24/1.
21.7.1998	Consultation with the then Wan Chai PDB on Central Reclamation Phase III (CRIII) proposed reclamation and roadworks.

23.7.1998	Consultation with the then Central and Western PDB on CRIII proposed reclamation and roadworks.
12.11.1998	Information paper for LegCo Panel on Planning, Lands and Works (PLW Panel) the planning parameters, scope and programme.
10.6.1999	The Administration and a delegation of the Town Planning Board presented the amendment plan, together with the Board's draft vision and goals for the Victoria Harbour, to the PLW Panel.
20.7.1999	Briefing sessions with the Real Estate Developers Association of Hong Kong and professional institutes (Hong Kong Institution of Engineers, Hong Kong Institute of Planning, Hong Kong Institute of Landscape Architects, Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors and Hong Kong Institute of Architects) on the proposed amendments to the draft OZP.
22.7.1999	Consultation with the Environment & Works Committee of the then Central & Western PDB on the proposed amendments to the draft OZP.
31.5.2002	Consultation with the PLW Panel on launching the Tamar development project.
10.10.2002	Consultation with the Central & Western District Council on the details of the Tamar project.
4.4.2003	Consultation with PLW Panel on the funding application for the Tamar project.
7.5.2003	Consultation with the Public Works Subcommittee on the funding application for the Tamar project.
21.10.2005	Post-Policy Address briefing for PLW Panel on the re-launch of the Tamar project.
22.11.2005	Consultation with the PLW Panel on the details of the re-launched Tamar project.
17.12.2005	Special PLW Panel meeting for discussions with deputations.
9.2.2006	PLW Panel Subcommittee meeting for discussions with deputations.

**Administration Wing
Chief Secretary for Administration's Office
March 2006**

Appendix I

Item no.	Date	Document
1.	October 1997	Proposals for Central Government Complex
2.	December 1997	Proposals for Central Government Complex and LegCo Annex
3.	April/May 1998	Fieldwork Report : For Ground Investigation and Laboratory Testing (Note: Due to the exceedingly large volume, appendixes/tables to the report would only be available upon request)
4.	October 1998	Preliminary Environmental Review for Proposed Central Government Offices at Tamar
5.	December 1998	Preliminary Traffic Impact Assessment for the Proposed Central Government Complex at Tamar
6.	September 2000	Proposals for Central Government Complex
7.	April 2002	Legislative Council Brief : Use of the Tamar Site for the Development of the Central Government Complex
8.	March 2003	Ground Investigation Report : Land Contamination Report (Note: Due to the exceedingly large volume, appendixes/tables to the report would only be available upon request)
9.	March 2003	Ground Investigation Report : Final Fieldwork Report (Note: Due to the exceedingly large volume, appendixes/tables to the report would only be available upon request)
10.	September 2005	Chapter 4 of Transport Department's Submission to the Expert Panel Forum on Sustainable Transport Planning and Central-Wan Chai Bypass
11.	September 2005	Report on Sustainability Assessment : Re-launch of Tamar Development Project

Appendix II

Accommodation in Central Government Office (CGO) and Murray Building (MB)

Offices / Ancillary facilities	GFA (m²)
Government Secretariat offices in CGO* :	38,000
Communal facilities in CGO :	4,200
Government Secretariat offices in MB* :	33,000
Communal facilities in MB	800
Total	76,000

* Including offices of the Chief Executive, Executive Council and its secretariat, Chief Secretary for Administration, Financial Secretary, other Principal Officials, bureaux and essential support offices/units.