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Panel on Development

Meeting on 25 November 2008

**Background brief on
proposed New Development Areas in North East New Territories**

Purpose

This paper provides background information on the proposed New Development Areas (NDAs) in North East New Territories (NENT) and a summary of the concerns and views expressed by Members.

Background

2. The Planning and Development Study on NENT, commissioned by the Planning Department and completed in 2003, identified Kwu Tung North, Fanling North and Ping Che/Ta Kwu Ling as suitable NDAs and confirmed their feasibility based on findings of various planning, engineering and environmental assessments. In view of the slower growth of population and housing demand, the NDA proposals were shelved, pending a comprehensive review of the need for strategic development areas in the "Hong Kong 2030: Planning Vision and Strategy" (the HK2030 Study)¹.

3. The HK2030 Study recommends proceeding with Kwu Tung North, Fanling North and Ping Che/Ta Kwu Ling NDAs (the Three-in-One NDA Scheme) and the Hung Shui Kiu NDA to address the long-term housing demand and provide employment. It recommends that NDAs shall be developed for multiple purposes, including the provision of land for housing, education and community facilities, improvement of the rural environment, better protection of

¹ The HK2030 Study updates the territorial development strategy for Hong Kong with a view to recommending a spatial development pattern to respond to various social, economic and environmental needs in the next 20 to 30 years. The HK2030 Study has been completed and the findings were promulgated to the public in October 2007.

resources of high conservation value, and timely development of land for special industries² and open storage uses.

4. The HK2030 Study proposes to stagger the implementation of the two NDA schemes for better resource utilization, i.e. planning, land clearance and works management, and that the Three-in-One NDA Scheme will proceed first.

5. On 26 February 2008, the Panel on Development discussed the Administration's proposal to carry out a planning and engineering study (P&E Study) on the NDAs in the North East New Territories (i.e. the Three-in-One NDA Scheme). On the recommendation of the Public Works Subcommittee, the Finance Committee approved on 9 May 2008 the relevant funding proposal at an estimated cost of \$54.2 million in money-of-the-day prices.

6. The scope of the P&E Study includes --

- (a) detailed planning and engineering studies including preparation of Recommended Outline Development Plans (RODPs) and Recommended Layout Plans (RLPs), confirmation of the feasibility of the RODPs and the RLPs, carrying out preliminary design of engineering works, and formulation of implementation strategies for the NDAs;
- (b) environmental impact assessments (EIA) including heritage impact assessment for the NDA development and associated engineering infrastructure;
- (c) public engagement exercise in relation to the formulation of the RODPs and RLPs; and
- (d) associated site investigation including supervision.

The P&E Study was then scheduled for commencement in June 2008 and completion in June 2011.

Concerns and views expressed by Members

Comprehensive planning

7. Members have urged the Administration to adopt comprehensive planning for the NDAs with a balanced mix of housing developments, adequate and timely provision of transport facilities, medical and other community facilities, as well as employment opportunities. Some Members have pointed

² Special industries refer to industries with clean and high-value-added industrial processes.

out that the Mass Transit Railway alone is inadequate in serving the residents of the NDAs. The Administration should consider the provision of other transport services to serve the residents of the NDAs. Moreover, there should be good pedestrian links and cycle tracks in the NDAs.

8. The Administration has advised that the planning for the NDAs would be people-oriented, and adequate community facilities would be in place before residents start to move in. There would be a balanced mix of housing developments in the NDAs, and there would also be sufficient transport facilities for the residents. Land has been reserved along the Lok Ma Chau spur line for a station at Kwu Tung. The planning intention is to ensure local employment opportunities for residents in the NDAs and nearby fringe areas such as Fanling North. Employment opportunities, including those from industries with clean and high value-added industrial processes, would be available. While no hospital has been planned for the NDAs at present, the Administration would review the need for various government, institution and community facilities, including a hospital, in the P&E Study.

9. Members have also expressed concern on whether the planning of the NDAs would take into account the growth of population and traffic arising from the opening up of the Frontier Closed Area and the proposed new Boundary Control Point at Liantang/Heung Yuen Wai. There is also a view that the planning of the NDAs should not be constrained by the existing area boundaries.

10. The Administration has advised that the Three-in-One NDA Scheme, the proposed Liantang/Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Control Point, the future developments on the land to be released from the Closed Area and the Lok Ma Chau Loop are all inter-related to a certain extent. Apart from providing boundary crossing facilities, the proposed Boundary Control Point would be conducive to the development of North New Territories. The associated connecting road would be beneficial to the NDAs. The Development Bureau and the Security Bureau would join hands in coordinating the planning of the land to be released from the Frontier Closed Area and the implementation of the NDAs. The Administration would also work closely with the Shenzhen authorities in developing areas like the Lok Ma Chau Loop and Liantang/Heung Yuen Wai. Two consultancy studies on the planning for the Frontier Closed Area and Liantang/Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Control Point are in progress and the consultant responsible for undertaking the P&E Study for the NDAs would make reference to those studies.

11. The Administration has further advised that while the boundaries of the NDAs would be set out in the consultancy agreement for the conduct of the P&E Study, the consultant would be advised of the need to allow flexibility in determining the actual development areas having regard to the latest planning circumstances which may affect the areas.

Planning strategies

12. With regard to planning strategies for the NDAs, the following views have been expressed by individual Members --

- (a) the Administration should define the role of NENT in Hong Kong's future development;
- (b) land use planning for the NDAs should aim at providing a diversified life for the residents and a vibrant street environment;
- (c) the development of the NDAs should not be at the expense of the existing natural environment;
- (d) the NDAs should be designed with due regard to their unique characteristics;
- (e) the plot ratio should not be higher than three and the height limit should not exceed 100mPD;
- (f) the industries to be developed in the NDAs should not cause any nuisance to the residents and the impact on the environment should be reduced as far as possible; and
- (g) consideration should be given to allocating land for container open storage use.

13. The Administration has advised that in taking forward the planning and development of the NDAs, it would attach importance to the provision of necessary road networks and utilities for the development of logistics industry and other economic activities. The intention is to reserve sites for special industries with clean and high value-added industrial processes. The Administration would tap on the development of the NDAs to tackle incongruities in existing land uses, with due regard to preservation of heritage and rural environment. As part of the P&E Study, a Heritage Impact Assessment would be conducted to assess the impact of the proposed developments of the NDAs on heritage sites, if any. Environmental issues including greening works and design of the pedestrian walkways are key design issues and would be given due consideration in the planning and development of the NDAs. An environmental impact assessment would be undertaken to ensure that the proposed uses would be environmentally acceptable.

Public engagement arrangements

14. On Members' concern about the public engagement arrangements, the Administration has advised that apart from video films and display materials,

physical models would be produced for the exercise to facilitate the public, notably people of different sectors of the community, in understanding the proposals for planning and development of the NDAs. The public engagement exercise would be carried out in three stages --

- (a) collecting initial views through informal discussion with the relevant District Councils and other stakeholders at the first stage;
- (b) seeking further views on the planning concepts through public forums, exhibitions and briefings to the District Councils, the Legislative Council and other relevant bodies at the second stage; and
- (c) consulting the public on the land use planning after completion of the planning and technical assessments at the final stage.

Implementation approach

15. On the Administration's indication that it would consider adopting the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) approach in implementing NDAs, some Members have expressed concern that the implementation of the NDAs under a PPP approach would be led by developers and the Administration would be in a passive position. Members have also cautioned that the Administration should ensure fairness and transparency in the implementation process. The Administration has assured Members that the implementation approach would be fair, open and legal. It would try its best to overcome the challenges of adopting the PPP approach.

Recent development

16. The Administration plans to launch the Stage One Public Engagement of the P&E Study in November 2008, and will brief the Panel on Development on the relevant details at the Panel meeting on 28 November 2008.

17. A list of relevant papers is in the **Appendix**.

Proposed New Development Areas in North East New Territories

List of relevant papers

Council/Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Development	26 February 2008	Administration's paper on "North East New Territories New Development Areas -- Planning and Engineering Study" (LC Paper No. CB(1)860/07-08(03)) (http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/panels/plw/papers/dev0226cb1-860-3-e.pdf) Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. CB(1)1276/07-08) (http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/panels/plw/minutes/de080226.pdf)
Public Works Subcommittee	23 April 2008	PWSC(2008-09)2 on the funding proposal on "Review studies on North East New Territories New Development Areas : consultants' fees and site investigation" (http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/fc/pwsc/papers/p08-02e.pdf) Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. PWSC93/07-08) (http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/fc/pwsc/minutes/pw080423.pdf)
Finance Committee	9 May 2008	FCR(2008-09)7 on "Recommendations of the Public Works Subcommittee made at its meeting held on 23 April 2008" (http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/fc/fc/papers/f08-07e.pdf) Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. FC12/08-09) (http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/fc/fc/minutes/fc080509.pdf)