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HONG KONG INSTITUTE OF REAL ESTATE ADMINISTRATORS

CB(1)595/09-10(09)

2 December 2009

BY FAX & BY POST

2008 - 2010

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Clerk to the Subcommittee on Harbourfront Planning
Legislative Council Secretariat
3/F Citibank Tower
3 Garden Road
Central
Hong Kong

Dear Sir

Reply on Urban Design Study for New Central Harbourfront

Thank you for your letter of 17 November, inviting us to give our views on the revised design concepts and proposals in the above Study. We would like to make the following comments:

- Site 1 and Site 2:** We concur with the proposal to relocate the proposed hotel and office development away from these two sites and to provide a "mixed use precinct" instead. However, under the shadow of IFC II and fronted by the "enhanced" Central Piers 2 to 6, we have doubts as to whether the proposed six and two storey blocks can become "iconic". In our opinion, these three blocks should be "melted down" to merge with the overall design of the landscaped deck and the enhanced Central Piers. We believe this proposed cluster will have better potential to become an "icon" along the harbourfront.
- Site 3:** We would suggest that the "stepping down" from the landscaped deck to Star Ferry can be more "natural"; ie the landscaped deck should not change abruptly into a footbridge to cross the road. Indeed, it is worth exploring the feasibility of extending the landscaped deck of the site to Star Ferry Pier to merge with landscaped deck of Site 1 and Site 2.
- Site 4:** We are of the view that the courtyards should face the harbour side instead of Road P2. The tree lined boulevard would be attractive enough as a landscaped buffer when viewed from the City Hall.
- Site 5:** We support the relocation of the hotel and office GFA to this site.
- Site 6:** Any pedestrian friendly walkway in Hong Kong should cater for its rainy and hot days. Therefore, we suggest that the existing open spaces along the route should not be left out from the overall design. Sheltered pedestrian routes between popular destinations should be provided and integrated into the overall landscape design.

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6. **Site 7:** In our opinion, a continuous sheltered pedestrian walkway from HKCEC all the way to Star Ferry lined with shops, kiosks, alfresco dining, galleries, etc. is needed to link up the proposed clusters at Site 6 and Site 4. The walkway can cross-link to harbourfront facilities/amenities, landscaped pockets, features etc and to major developments, such as HKCEC groups of buildings, the HKAPA and the proposed Visual Arts Centre, Site 5, Central Government HQ, City Hall and Statute Square etc along the way. A cycle track can run alongside of the continuous walkway and so is a slip road alongside of Road P2 to allow public transportation to carry passengers in and out of the waterfront promenade area at “convenient” locations. In our opinion, accessibility, not only on foot but also by light public transport and private cars, is the key because the area is simply too large for moving on foot only, let alone during rainy and hot days. Only with an efficient transport system built into Site 6 and 7 together with a pedestrian friendly walkway network served with diverse retail, dining, and entertainment outlets along the route can we turn the waterfront area into a truly vibrant urban strip between Wanchai and Central.

7. **Site 8:** We support the reprovisioning of Queen’s Pier to this site. However, clarification is required as to whether the pier itself, which is now sandwiched between two ‘finger’ piers, can still serve its original purpose as a boat/yacht landing point.

8. All in all, we support the view that the scope of the UDS should not be limited by the existing OZP planning framework and we are of the opinion that planning should not be constrained by any “artificial” boundaries. The Central Waterfront presents a unique opportunity for a bold urban design to integrate the existing and new buildings into the overall landscape design rather than to landscape around these buildings.

Yours sincerely

Marco Wu
President