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Written Views on the Revised Design Concepts and Proposals for the Key Sites in the Urban Design Study for the New Central Harbourfront and the Revised Master Layout Plan (MLP) for the New Central Harbourfront

1. The Public Affairs Committee (PAC) of the Hong Kong Institute of Planners has no objection in principle to Government's proposed changes to the key sites in the Urban Design Study for the new Central harbourfront, except the relocation of Queen's Pier (QP) to an area between Central Piers 9 and 10 and not to reassemble it at its original location.

2. Public engagement is indeed desirable for building consensus. We appreciate that Government had made a great effort in both the Stage 1 and Stage 2 Public Engagement processes to consult and to collect views from the community. However, we have strong doubts as to the effectiveness of the process of the consultation. Since there remains an ambiguity in the means of reconciling these views, as to how the revised plan can be said to have justly reflected the views of the wider community. We understand that the Study is entering the final design stage in preparing the planning and design briefs for each key site and fine tuning the MLP. We believe the community is expecting Government to conduct the same building consensus approach to handle the final MLP and the planning and design briefs for each key site of the Study before submission to the Town Planning Board. We wish to point out that the final stage of the Study is a very critical and most essential part in the building consensus process as it will allow the community further opportunities to respond to the Draft Final MLP, and the Draft Planning and Design Briefs. The building consensus process cannot be completed without the latter stage of public participation.

3. For the draft MLP for the Study, we have the following observations for the Government to further consider. These are: -

- i. the planning and design of the open space are rather fragmented and lack coherence and connectivity in an urban design sense. A comprehensive landscape master plan is required to strengthen the hierarchical organization and connectivity of all public open spaces and pedestrian routes throughout the entire Study area.
- ii. the location and building massing of the proposed CWB Ventilation Buildings (B2) and Ventilation Shafts (B8) in the draft MLP are needed to be further studied. These building structures are too massive and out of human scale, creating adverse visual impact detrimental to the surrounding cityscape. Special design to reduce the building bulk (building height and site coverage) with innovative built-forms and green features, or even the possibility of integrating these into the adjoining new developments should be investigated. It may not be necessary to erect them directly on top of the infrastructure while there should be a lot of “smart”, practically feasible and sustainable engineering and architectural alternatives to treat such facilities.
- iii. Similarly, the location and the building bulk of the proposed electricity supply stations (B10) should also be reviewed in order to minimize the visual impact on the area, and protect the image of the future harbourfront.
- iv. It is not clear how the ‘Leisure and Recreation Facility’ item A21 (La Ramblas) will function, as it is essentially a narrow strip surrounded on all sides by busily trafficked roads. The northern end is particularly odd since “ramblers” cannot access the waterfront without having to cross the busy P2 road..
- v. To enhance the north-south linkage and access to the waterfront, it would be better for the footbridge at Hutchison House across Connaught Road to be connected to the elevated walkway system along the eastern side of City Hall.

- vi. The green public open spaces appear to be too fragmented, with many layers and cross-cuttings between them. It warrants a comprehensive and well defined landscape plan to illustrate the meaning of the actual planning intention of each of them and the overall open space / recreation areas system.. .
 - vii. The overall functional connectivity from east to west throughout the entire Study area is still quite fragmented. Greater steps to ensure connectivity of open space and integrated design are needed.
 - viii. Planting trees along the waterfront could help enhance the visual amenity and provide shading effect for the general public. However, this may not be applicable at some prominent locations such as the front area of the planned Green Carpet (A19) as it may adversely affect the original concept and diminishes its the impact as an axis and vista towards the harbour.
 - ix. We are concerned that a long stretch of the harbourfront will be occupied by the PLA Pier (which will be only used occasionally) with no proper measures to better ameliorate this with the public area alongside.
4. We are concerned that the MLP is less than visionary and pro-active in exploiting the opportunities that exist for innovative facilities and design. These might, for example, include measures to make better use of a marine basin and related maritime uses or museum in the eastern part of the site, and an extension of landscape over roads in the eastern part of the area that will both ameliorate their environmental impact and create useable open space.
 5. In view of the above, we urge the Government to further refine plans and proceed with another public engagement to present the Draft Final MLP, together with a comprehensive landscape master plan, and the draft planning and design briefs for the Study before submission to the Town Planning Board, so as to achieve consensus on this important and meaningful new Central harbourfront.



Public Affairs Committee

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