

Enhancing Land Supply Strategy – Reclamation outside Victoria Harbour and Rock Cavern Development

Viewpoints of Li Yan Chun

Summary of Views

For the sake of continual economical development and of providing adequate living space to cope with the growth of population, we support the Government's proposal to carry out reclamation and rock cavern developments at suitable sites in Hong Kong or nearby area. However the works should be executed only after a careful assessment of the environment, commitment to sustainable engineering design and balance of various social interests.

Suitable Sites

It is not easy to identify a suitable site in Hong Kong. Each potential site has different degree of environmental and community impacts from which various reasons can be extracted to defeat its feasibility. While one can easily stereotype the vocal groups as acting selfish in respect of their vested interests, or exacerbation of environmental value, the Government shall not discard their views lightly. In fact, from what we observe from the 25 potential sites for reclamation identified earlier is that, an good candidate: sparsely populated, existing transportation network, close proximity to urban areas – the Southern District, is missing from the study. One reason we guess (we may be wrong) is that there are a number of highly valued land and upper class settlement in that area which make it undesirable to heavy construction works to carry out, i.e. the Government has given courtesy to the southern district residents. On this assumption, we are, however, not trying to argue about defeating the rich areas. After all, this is not a communist society. Our point is that such courtesy shall apply to all areas. All people shall be treated equal in considering having heavy development works carried out in their neighbourhood. If not, stronger class resentment may result.

Careful Assessment of the Environment

We believe that this is an area that is popularly commented and we do not intend to add too much. We only want to make two remarks, that the project shall not be pushed forward if an independent and professional environmental impact assessment finds that the project cannot meet the statutory requirements; and that considering the significant carbon emissions and construction waste generated, cavern construction may not be taken as a highly prioritized land supply option.

Commitment to Sustainable Engineering Design

In the previous public forum, we are glad to see a number of groups sharing excellent experience in producing environmental friendly reclamation designs. As a group of young people, we suggest that environment sustainability is one of the most prevalent values among younger generation nowadays.

Therefore we believe that the Government shall commit to sustainable engineering design in carrying out reclamation or cavern developments. While it is obvious that Government has in various occasions made itself clear that environmental value is embraced, the not-so-obvious problem is engineering design and construction nowadays are often given too little time to investigate, design and construct. Engineering products are always delivered of course, however it comes with a cost of more wastage and not-the-best design. The new Tamar Government Offices is a good example of that. Therefore, we opine that the Government shall commit to carry out sustainable engineering design by providing adequate funding and project period to facilitate a truly good design for these sensitive mega projects.

Balance of Various Social Interests

Hong Kong people, especially the lower-incomes, are very often, if not constantly, exposed to tight living environment, such as inside cramped public transport, small apartment buildings and dense streets, where we need to make a lot of compromises for the sake of maintaining harmony with one another. The lack of personal space created a lot of internal distress, as well as unnecessary disputes between people. Our average people in this city deserve more space for their own well being.

Besides, with the growth of the population, the economy size no doubt has to be expanded as well to make business opportunities available for more people to enjoy. However, one important principle is that the economic growth is not directly link to community satisfaction, something that Hong Kong is short of nowadays. In fact, we have felt an expanding resentment to the upper class and the widening of the wealth gap. Therefore, land supply strategy shall give focus on diversifying the economic model of Hong Kong in order to provide opportunities for different talents to flourish. We believe that in defining directions of enhancing land supply strategy, this principle is an important element.

Think-outside-of-the-Box Ideas

We like to take this chance to pitch the following two innovative ideas for the Government to consider:

1. Hong Kong is now part of China. Although this is still a concept unfamiliar to a lot of Hong Kong people and despite a number of conflicts with mainlanders arisen in recent times, we should adapt to take a wider view. We argue that we should not just look at the Hong Kong map when considering possible sites for reclamation, why can't we also zoom out and consider the South China Sea area beyond Hong Kong's border for reclamation and cavern development?
2. Apart from the six means of enhancing land supply, we suggest the 7th means: to develop those country park areas adjacent to urban district while using reclamation to form an eco-island country park using C&D waste to compensate the loss of country park area. Advantages: produce extra land supply for development in readily available well-connected land; put C&D waste into good use; form new eco-area; provide new country park for sightseeing; make tourist attractions; and produce a would-be Worldly recognized excellent example of environmental innovation.