

Enclosure

**Legislative Council  
Panel on Development**

**Views from the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers on  
The Government's Strategy to Enhance Land Supply through  
Reclamation outside Victoria Harbour and Rock Cavern Development**

**General**

In response to the invitation from the captioned panel, the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers (HKIE) is pleased to provide our views on the subject on enhancing land supply.

2. As a professional organisation reflecting the voice of the engineers, the HKIE places serious concern on the strategic development of Hong Kong and the livelihood of all citizens in our society. On issues which would be of significant social and economic impact to the long term development of Hong Kong, such as the current public consultation on land supply strategy, the HKIE opines that any strategies identified should be under the overriding principle that the general public of our society and our future generations could be benefited.

**Objectives and Concerns on Land Supply**

3. Hong Kong has long been concerned on the lack of applicable land ready for current and future development. We share the objectives that optimal land supply should be ready to meet the public demand on improving living quality, accommodate the healthy growth of local population, and sustain and enhance the economic activities of Hong Kong. In this light, we agree that Hong Kong should keep a strategic and long-term land supply approach to meet the various demands in the coming years.

4. Land supply is never purely an economic consideration. In further contemplation, the lack of stable supply of land would exert harmful effects to everyone in our society. High land prices stemmed from insufficient supply would lead to high rent and selling price of both residential and commercial properties, which in turn would affect the business environment and the living quality of the public. By having an optimal level of land reserve, the Administration can then suitably monitor the land market equilibrium, and ensure that the future demand as arisen due to circumstances change could be met.

5. To sustain Hong Kong's competitive edge, we note the importance of optimal land supply as a major drive in ensuring Hong Kong's economic development. In fact, surrounding regions of Hong Kong have been actively creating land to support their development blueprint. For instances, areas such as Macau, Hengqin (橫琴) and Qianhai (前海) have taken considerable land reclamation works in order to facilitate their substantial infrastructure and community facilities constructions. Facing the

fierce competition from our surrounding counterparts, it is essential that Hong Kong should also have a strategic plan in ensuring long-term land supply for its development. Making land available for use is a long process, and hence creating land reserve for flexible development and usage is imperative and instrumental for meeting our future demand. In this light, the HKIE supports the Administration to maintain an optimal land reserve and consider to allow the purpose of land use open for public consultation in later days in response to the circumstances and community needs in different points of time in future.

6. The HKIE welcomes adopting multiple approaches in enhancing land supply. However, we recognise the limitation of redeveloping the existing developed areas. It is also of importance to maintain our well-kept balance of the country park area in the territory. As such, the HKIE considers that reclamation and development of rock cavern are suitable means.

### **Reclamation**

7. We consider that reclamation is a relatively efficient method as the time and cost involved to acquire land are comparatively lower among the options as set out in the proposal. Also, obtaining new land through reclamation would minimise the effects to the inhabitants of existing developed areas.

8. We believe that engineering technology nowadays enables us to better manage the environmental impact of reclamation. Advanced reclamation methods such as “Drain Method” have been found to produce much less harmful consequence to the marine environment, as long as the compensation/contingency measures are well in place through careful planning and implementation to control the effects brought by reclamation.

9. Reclamation may also produce positive impact to environment. In fact, if with suitable sorting and usage of the construction and demolition materials, we can save the time and cost for disposal of them by converting them as the filling materials for reclamation. Also, the seawall that would be constructed for forming the artificial islands or linking islands by reclamation could also produce beneficial effects to the marine ecosystems. With suitable enhancement and time, the rifts among the cobbles and stones within the seawall and the rough seawall surface can foster the growth of marine organisms and thus facilitating the provision of food sources for other marine lives in long run.

10. In regard to sites selection for reclamation, we are of the view that the identified location(s) should have potential for connectivity with the existing developed zones as well as meeting the long term development plan of the territory. Rather than conducting scattered and piecemeal reclamation works around the territory, it would be more desirable to identify a larger zone, either a single site or a few adjacent ones, for reclamation and development to allow more economical

and synergetic advantages. This would also facilitate a more integrated strategy for handling pertaining assessment, town planning, infrastructure planning and land use design. Certainly the focal site would also limit the effect of reclamation to the shorelines of other areas in the territory.

11. The HKIE suggests the Administration to make reference of the previous studies in 1970s and 1980s with regard to the site selection proposals of the then Hong Kong new airport and reconsider those sites for future reclamation and redevelopment purposes.

### **Developing Rock Cavern**

12. The HKIE also considers the option of rock cavern as an effective way to acquire land. Compared to reclamation, rock cavern may bring less negative impact to the neighborhood as the possible locations of cavern are usually remote from the habitation areas. Also, developing rock caverns can provide a gradual supply of land and release valuable land zones in the developed areas for other more essential residential and commercial uses.

13. Weighting the overall impact, we note the multi-fold values of developing rock cavern. Though it is understood that the location and condition may be less appropriate for residential purposes, the rock cavern will however be appropriate for constructing facilities such as swimming pools, sport grounds and performance venue. Public facilities could also be constructed in rock caverns. For instance, the Stanley sewage treatment plant is a good example of smart use of the rock cavern. Pursuing this option further, the Administration may explore with the power companies on the feasibility of rock cavern development for construction of new and/or redevelopment of aging power transmission/distribution substations and facilities. Certainly, related engineering surveys, feasibility/cost-effectiveness studies, environmental impact assessment etc should be conducted to verify the feasibility of rock cavern usage for such purposes.

14. Furthermore, we note that rock cavern development would also bring tangible benefits rather than creating wastes. In fact, the excavated debris from the rock cavern would provide valuable sources of industrial and construction materials. It is therefore suggested that the Administration should devise proper public education and promotion plan to provide the public with knowledge of the benefit of this option.

15. Nevertheless, we understand that the constructed facilities within the rock cavern development will require considerable mechanical ventilation and lighting at all times. We agree that this issue has to be evaluated against other forms of development, e.g. reclamation, in terms of carbon footprint. Similarly, health and safety risks would also need to be carefully evaluated for developments involving access by the public.

### **Other Viable Suggestions**

16. Apart from rock cavern, it is suggested that the Administration may evaluate the social and environmental benefits and feasibility for revitalising those small reservoirs which might be of less significance to water supply, by means of reclamation or conversion into other land facilities, similar to the cavern development as proposed.

17. The Administration may also consider speeding up the evaluation on the usage of rehabilitated Shek O Quarry as this site has been classified as “undetermined” for years together with Tai Tam. This could be a viable land supply option for further study.

### **Taking the Lead by the Administration**

18. We agree that initiating any new major infrastructure project would require considerable planning and public consensus. As the subject of land supply involves the interest of every person in the community, it is suggested that the Administration should take the lead in driving for consensus in the community in the first place, so that further constructive discussion and compromise among stakeholders will be carried out in regard to the options to be employed and the sites selection issues.

19. We believe that creating sufficient land reserve with flexible land use purpose is essential for our future development. The HKIE supports the Administration’s initiative to acquire land timely based on the studies projecting Hong Kong’s land demand in the coming future. Nevertheless, further consultation and compromise would need to be pursued through open and interactive channels, for the community to decide in future the specific land use of such land reserve in response to the needs and demands arisen from time to time. Public engagement is close to the heart of engineers for every mega project. The HKIE wishes that the governing team will address the critical land supply issue “head-on” with strong leadership, overcoming nymbism and turning the strategy into reality to create a quality life for all.