

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
PANEL ON DEVELOPMENT**

**North East New Territories New Development Areas
Planning and Engineering Study**

Purpose

At the special meeting of the Panel on Development on 15 December 2012, Members passed a motion on the “North East New Territories New Development Areas Planning and Engineering Study” (NENT NDAs Study) urging the Government to withdraw the NENT NDAs proposal, immediately stop misleading media campaign concerned and formulate agricultural policies to protect local farmland and develop local agriculture. This paper aims to respond to the motion.

The Administration’s Response

NENT NDAs Proposal

2. The NENT NDAs proposal is not a new initiative in recent years. The Territorial Development Strategy Review undertaken in the early 1990s had already proposed that the potential for strategic growth in the NENT areas be examined. The Planning and Development Study on NENT, commenced in 1998, identified Kwu Tung North (KTN), Fanling North (FLN) and Ping Che/Ta Kwu Ling (PC/TKL) as suitable for NDAs development. The public was consulted on the development proposal between 1999 and 2000. In 2003, having regard to the housing demand at the time, the Government decided to suspend the NDAs Study pending a comprehensive review of Hong Kong’s overall planning under the Study on Hong Kong 2030: Planning Vision and Strategy (the HK2030 Study).

3. The HK2030 Study promulgated in 2007 recommended the development of the KTN, FLN and PC/TKL NDAs as well as the Hung Shui Kiu NDA to address the long-term housing demand in Hong Kong and to create employment opportunities. The NENT NDAs and the Hung Shui Kiu NDA were included as one of the ten major infrastructure projects in the 2007-08 Policy Address.

4. The NENT NDAs Study resumed in June 2008 to formulate a planning and development framework for the KTN, FLN and PC/TKL NDAs, and to prepare development plans and implementation strategy. Three stages of the Public Engagement exercise have been conducted for the Study. The Stage Three Public Engagement (PE3), which was conducted between mid-June and end September 2012, was to gauge public views on the Recommended Outline Development Plans (RODPs) for the NDAs. The major issues of public concern received during the period and the Administration's initial responses are set out in detail in the paper submitted to the Legislative Council Panel on Development on 30 October 2012 [LC Paper No. CB(1)61/12-13(05)]. We expect to publish the PE3 Report in the first half of 2013.

5. According to the planning proposals in the consultation document of the PE3 exercise, 533 hectares (ha) of developable land could be provided in the NDAs, including 150 ha of housing land to provide some 53 800 residential units for about 152 000 persons, and about 52 000 local employment opportunities would be created. We are collating and analysing the public comments collected during the PE3 exercise in detail. We would adjust the planning proposals for the NDAs as appropriate after examining the comments from the planning and engineering feasibility perspectives. The adjustments would include increasing the public to private housing ratio to over 50%, identifying suitable sites for new Home Ownership Scheme developments, and subject to the housing supply at the time, suitably incorporating clause(s) on "Hong Kong property for Hong Kong people" in private housing sites, to meet the housing demand of the public, etc.

6. Since resuming in 2008, the NENT NDAs Study has been at the forefront of various major studies on new development areas in terms of progress. According to the current programme, the first housing development (which will be public housing) in the NDAs is expected to complete in 2022, taking into account the time required for the relevant work and procedures. The NENT NDAs will be a main source of new housing in Hong Kong in future. If the NDAs proposal is withdrawn, the housing supply for the whole community, including public and private housing, will be seriously affected.

Television Announcements of Public Interest (APIs)

7. During the PE3 exercise of the NENT NDAs Study, there were comments that in addition to consulting local residents and relevant stakeholders,

the Government should also raise public awareness of the planning of the NENT NDAs. Moreover, during the PE exercise, there were quite a number of misunderstandings in the community about the planning intention of the NENT NDAs (e.g. the allegation that the NDAs will become the “city for rich non-permanent residents of Hong Kong” or “backyard of Shenzhen”). The Administration has clarified time and again publicly that the objective of implementing the NDAs is to meet the future housing demand of Hong Kong people and to cater for our economic and social development needs. Relevant APIs to show the past experience in new town development were launched to allow the general public to have a better understanding of the planning concept and intention of the NENT NDAs. In view of the need for broadcasting other government APIs, the NENT NDAs APIs were broadcast until 23 December 2012.

Policies in Support of Agricultural Development

8. Under the existing policy, the Government facilitates agricultural development through the provision of basic infrastructure and technical support, as well as low interest loans to farmers to enhance the productivity of the industry, develop modern and environmentally acceptable farming, and produce quality, safe and high-value farm products. In accordance with the free-market principle, the Government does not set any targets for local agricultural production or any indicator on the land size that is in active agricultural use. The Government also will not give any direct financial subsidy to the sector, nor will it protect the price level of farm products.

9. At present, about 3 280 ha of land in Hong Kong are zoned “Agriculture” (“AGR”) on statutory town plans. Whether the zoned agricultural land that is in private ownership would be used for agricultural activities by the owner or tenant is a decision of the land owner concerned.

10. Some of the farmers currently operating in the NDAs would inevitably be affected by the development. Under the RODPs, the core area of Long Valley is designated as a Nature Park (about 37 ha) where agricultural activities, in particular wet agriculture, could be allowed under Government's management. In addition, two pieces of land to the north and south of the Nature Park (about 45 ha) and a piece of land in Fu Tei Au in the FLN NDA (about 9 ha) would be maintained as “AGR” zone, in which existing farming practice could continue.

11. The Development Bureau in collaboration with relevant departments is seeking to identify available land in the vicinity of the NDAs that is suitable for agricultural use with a view to assisting farmers affected by the development to continue their farming activities. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) will play a facilitative role and match the relevant parties if it comes to AFCD's knowledge that there are land owners intending to sell or lease agricultural land.

**Development Bureau
Civil Engineering and Development Department
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