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**Public Works Subcommittee of the Finance Committee
of the Legislative Council**

**Minutes of the 16th meeting
held at the Legislative Council Chamber
on Wednesday, 7 June 2000, at 8:30 am**

Members present:

Hon HO Sai-chu, SBS, JP (Chairman)
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Kenneth TING Woo-shou, JP
Hon James TIEN Pei-chun, JP
Hon Edward HO Sing-tin, SBS, JP
Hon LEE Wing-tat
Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP
Prof Hon NG Ching-fai
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon Christine LOH
Hon CHAN Yuen-han
Hon CHAN Kam-lam
Hon SIN Chung-kai
Hon WONG Yung-kan
Hon LAU Kong-wah
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP

Members absent:

Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Hon Eric LI Ka-cheung, JP
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Dr Hon LEONG Che-hung, JP

Hon Gary CHENG Kai-nam, JP
Hon Mrs Miriam LAU Kin-yee, JP
Hon LAW Chi-kwong, JP

Public officers attending:

Miss Elizabeth TSE	Deputy Secretary for the Treasury
Mr S S LEE, JP	Secretary for Works
Mr Gordon SIU, JP	Secretary for Planning and Lands
Mr Mike STOKOE, JP	Deputy Director of Environmental Protection
Mr James HERD	Principal Assistant Secretary of the Treasury (Works)
Mr Andrew WELLS	Deputy Secretary for Housing
Mr H K WONG, JP	Director of Territory Development
Mr TSUI Wai	Chief Engineer (Sha Tin and Sai Kung), Territory Development Department
Ms Michelle LI	Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower (1)
Mr Jack CHAN	Deputy Secretary-General (1), University Grants Committee
Mr K S SHUM	Chief Technical Advisor/Subvented Projects, Architectural Services Department
Mr Patrick LI	Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower (2)
Mr S H PAU, JP	Director of Architectural Services
Mr Peter P Y LEUNG	Assistant Director (Special Duties), Education Department
Mr N M CHAN	Project Manager/1, Housing Department
Mr CHO Ping-chung	Chief Traffic Engineer/Kowloon, Transport Department
Mr K K SIN	Chief Traffic Engineer/New Territories East, Transport Department
Ms Shirley LAM	Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport (5)
Mr C J CHIVERS	Chief Engineer/New Territories West (1), New Territories West Development Office, Territory Development Department
Mr LEE Yan-ming	Chief Traffic Engineer/New Territories West, Transport Department
Mr Philip CHAN	Principal Assistant Secretary for Trade and Industry
Mr Vincent Y K POON	Assistant Commissioner (Control and Intellectual Property) Customs and Excise Department

Mr B S LIU

Chief Engineer(Yuen Long), New Territories
North Development Office, Territory
Development Department

Clerk in attendance:

Miss Polly YEUNG

Chief Assistant Secretary (1)3

Staff in attendance:

Ms Pauline NG
Ms Anita SIT

Assistant Secretary General 1
Senior Assistant Secretary (1)8

HEAD 711 - HOUSING

PWSC(2000-01)35

651TH

**Local roads, drainage and
associated engineering works in
Area 11A, package 13, Sha Tin**

Noting that the proposed works were planned to cope with the future demand arising from the planned development of a Private Sector Participation Scheme (PSPS) housing project, Miss Emily LAU commented that many problems had been associated with PSPS housing developments and the public generally had less confidence in PSPS housing flats than in those built by the Housing Authority (HA). In this connection, she enquired about the considerations for deciding whether a public housing project should be a PSPS project or a HA project, and whether PSPS housing flats were subject to the same sale condition of three-year return guarantee as HA's housing flats under the Home Ownership Scheme (HOS).

2. In reply, The Deputy Secretary for Housing (DS(H)) advised that the Housing Bureau (HB) had conducted a study in conjunction with HA on problems relating to PSPS housing flats and as a result, had modified the tendering arrangements and assessment system by placing greater emphasis on quality and safeguards for home owners. The Secretary for Housing had also assumed the chairmanship of the PSPS tender board. Hence, there was no reason to assume that the quality of PSPS housing flats was lower than that of HA's housing flats. He also confirmed that under the HOS, PSPS housing flats were subject to the same sale condition of three-year return guarantee. At Miss Emily LAU's request, DS(H) agreed to provide further information on the improved arrangements in respect of PSPS housing projects implemented after the said study.

Admin

3. As regards the considerations for adopting the PSPS approach, DS(H) advised that as highlighted in the white paper on housing policies issued in 1998, it was Government's policy to make use of private sector expertise and resources to deliver public housing projects. He confirmed that cost was not the main consideration for adopting the PSPS approach.

4. The item was voted on and endorsed.

BUILDING PROJECTS

New Commitment/Change in Commitment/Revision in Scope for Subvented Projects

HEAD 708 - CAPITAL SUBVENTIONS AND MAJOR SYSTEMS AND EQUIPMENT

PWSC(2000-01)37	15EJ	Student hostels, phase 2 (1 401 places), City University of Hong Kong
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5. Noting that the Government had agreed to provide the City University of Hong Kong (CityU) with 2 730 public-funded hostel places, Miss Emily LAU enquired about the target provision of hostel places as against the number of students in CityU and the expressed demand of students for hostel places. She said that in view of the crowded living environment in Hong Kong, she would be prepared to support a more generous provision of hostel places for university students than that promulgated by the Government in 1996.

6. In reply, the Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower (1) (PAS(EM)1) confirmed that the target provision of hostel places for CityU under the relevant policy was 2 730 places. This level of provision had been determined having regard to the number of students in CityU, the general distribution of their place of residence and the target that all undergraduates would have the opportunity to stay in hostels for at least one year and all research postgraduates, non-local students and those undergraduates whose daily travelling time exceeded four hours would be provided with hostel places.

7. Regarding the number of students in CityU, the Deputy Secretary General, University Grants Committee (DS-G,UGC) advised that there were different categories of students in CityU and the total number was just over 10 000. At the Chairman's request, the Administration agreed to provide a more detailed breakdown and information on how the target provision of 2 730 hostel places had been arrived at.

8. On the standard space provision for student hostels of UGC-funded institutions and the actual provision under the present proposal, PAS(EM)1 advised that the University Grants Committee (UGC) had completed a study on space and facility provisions for student hostels recently and as a result, had recommended a set of standards for student hostels of UGC-funded institutions. The standard space provision was 17.95 square metres (m²) per undergraduate and 22.25 m² per postgraduate. The hostel places and the associated facilities under the present proposal were designed on the basis of the standards recommended by UGC. The Chief Technical Advisor/Subvented Projects, Architectural Services Department (CTA/AP, ArchSD) supplemented that undergraduates would be accommodated in twin rooms with a net floor area of 15m² and postgraduates in single rooms with a net floor area of 8m².

9. In reply to Miss Emily LAU's enquiry on whether the said standards recommended by UGC were applicable to all hostels of UGC-funded institutions, PAS(EM)1 advised that these standards would be applied to new Government-funded hostel projects of UGC-funded institutions as far as practicable. However, in the case of conversion of existing premises for hostel purposes such as the proposal under the next item PWSC(2000-01)38, it would be necessary to adjust the design to the physical conditions of the site and hence, strict application of the standards might not be feasible.

10. As to why the height of the proposed four blocks of hostels varied from 10 to 17 storeys and whether the development potential of the present site had been optimized, the Administration confirmed that the proposed hostel blocks would optimize the permissible plot ratio for the site and the variation in the number of storeys among the blocks was mainly attributed to the topography of the site.

11. Noting that the target provision of 2 730 hostel places for CityU would be provided in three phases - 806 in phase 1, 1 401 in phase 2 and 523 in phase 3, Miss Emily LAU enquired how the number of places for each phase was determined. In reply, CTA/AP, ArchSD advised that the hostel project was planned in its entirety by the project consultant and thus, the number of hostel places to be provided in each phase had been decided at the early planning stage, having regard to the target provision and the topography and other physical conditions of the site.

12. The item was voted on and endorsed.

PWSC(2000-01)38	41EF	Conversion of Residence Nos. 5 to 9 into 590 student hostel places, Chinese University of Hong Kong
	42EF	Conversion of Residence No. 1 into academic support facilities, Chinese University of Hong Kong

13. Mr LEE Wing-tat considered that the cost for project 41EF - proposed conversion of Residences Nos. 5 to 9 into 590 places was rather high as the cost for each hostel place would amount to over \$50,000. He opined that the amount of demolition and building works should be minimized since these works were usually costly, and enquired about the scope of the conversion works involved in the proposed project.

14. In reply, DS-G,UGC advised that when planning for the project, the Administration and the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) had agreed to carry out works that were only absolutely necessary. As such, most of the internal partitioning walls and existing facilities of the quarters would be retained. The idea was to provide a mini-hall style accommodation for a group of students within the confines of a quarter, while the number of students to be accommodated in each room would vary according to the size of the existing rooms. CTA/AP, ArchSD supplemented that the unit cost of the proposed conversion works was \$1,077 per m² based on the construction floor area. The demolition and building costs accounted for only a small portion of the total project cost as most of the existing structures would be retained. The major cost item was building services which covered items such as air-conditioning facilities, electrical installations and ducting for computer facilities.

15. Noting that CHUK currently had 4 284 hostel places and an additional 757 hostel places were required to meet the target provision, Miss Emily LAU enquired about the number of students in CHUK, the number of students who applied for and were subsequently granted/rejected hostel places, and how these compared with the target provision. The Administration agreed to provide the information requested by Miss LAU before the relevant Finance Committee (FC) meeting (i.e. 23 June 2000).

Admin

16. Regarding the space provision per student under the conversion project 41EF, PAS(EM)1 advised that due to the existing partitioning of the quarter premises, the space provision standards recommended by UGC could not be strictly applied in this project. On average, the space provision per student under this project would be slightly above the recommended standards. She agreed to provide the relevant figures after the meeting.

Admin

17. As regards the option of selling or letting out the vacated quarters following the implementation of the UGC Home Financing Scheme (HFS), PAS(EM)1 advised that as the quarters were situated within the CUHK campus, there were practical difficulties in selling or letting them out. On the other hand, as an additional 757 hostel places had to be provided for CUHK under the existing policy on the provision of hostel places for UGC-funded institutions, the Administration considered that converting the surplus quarters into student hostels was a viable and cost-effective option.

18. In reply to Dr NG Ching-fai's enquiry, CTA/AP, ArchSD advised that based on the estimated nett building cost of some \$190,000 per hostel place under the previous project of CityU, it was estimated that the cost of constructing purpose-built hostels with 590 places for CUHK would be over \$110 million.

19. Mr SIN Chung-kai expressed the view that although constructing purpose-built hostels would incur a higher cost, this option could optimize the development potential of the sites concerned, and at the same time make available sufficient hostel places to meet the target provision.

20. In response, PAS(EM)1 advised that the proposed conversion project served the dual purpose of putting into good use the surplus quarters and timely provision of additional hostel places for CUHK. Although a higher plot ratio could be achieved by redevelopment, the Administration considered the conversion option more desirable as land was available within the campus of CUHK for development, and the conversion option would be less costly and less time-consuming than the redevelopment option.

21. Mr SIN Chung-kai was not fully convinced that conversion was a better option than redevelopment as he considered that there was scope for more efficient utilization of the sites concerned. Moreover, the proposed conversion project could only provide 590 hostel places which still fell short of the target provision. Referring to the layout plan attached to the discussion paper, Mr SIN enquired whether the Administration had considered demolishing Residence No. 5 and No. 6 and constructing a new hostel building on the site. He estimated that the hostel places that could be provided in the new hostel building would be sufficient to meet the shortfall of 757 hostel places. In reply, CTA/AP, ArchSD advised that due to the topography of the site, the construction floor area of such a new building would not be significantly greater than that of the two existing residence blocks.

22. Mr Edward HO expressed reservation on the proposal. He shared the concern that the development potential of the sites of the surplus quarters could not be efficiently utilized under the current proposal. He also sought confirmation on whether CUHK would have sufficient land for development to meet its needs in the foreseeable future. He considered it necessary to peruse

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the designs of the existing quarters and the future hostels to assess whether the conversion project per se was cost-effective. In response, PAS(EM)1 advised that for the time being, CUHK had sufficient land within its own campus to provide the required facilities to meet its needs. The Administration agreed to provide relevant design drawings on the quarters before and after conversion for members' reference before the relevant FC meeting.

Admin

23. Miss Emily LAU shared the concerns of Mr SIN Chung-kai and Mr Edward HO. She enquired about the number of hostel places that could be provided if the plot ratio of the sites of the five quarter blocks in question were optimized to build new student hostels. In reply, CTA/AP, ArchSD said that the Administration had not made such an assessment, but stressed that the space and facilities within the existing quarters would be optimized to provide as many hostel places as possible.

24. On members' concern about the remaining 167 outstanding hostel places to meet the target hostel provision for CUHK, PAS(EM)1 advised that the Administration would continue to work closely with CUHK. One option was to make use of further surplus quarters which might be available in the near future for conversion into hostels. Where funds were available, consideration might be given to constructing new hostels within the campus to meet the shortfall. DS-G,UGC added that apart from the 108 staff quarter units for the proposed conversion projects, there were still 167 staff quarter units at CUHK. These remaining quarter units would be gradually vacated following the departure of the staff members or when they opted to join the UGC HFS. Moreover, new appointees would no longer be offered quarters. As there was limited scope for selling or letting out the surplus quarters in CUHK, converting these further surplus quarters into student hostels would be a viable and cost-effective option. Therefore, the Administration did not envisage that there would be great difficulty in providing the remaining shortfall of 167 hostel places in the longer term. To address members' concern, the Administration agreed to provide an information note before the relevant FC meeting on 23 June 2000 to set out the options or plan(s) for meeting the remaining shortfall of 167 hostel places for CUHK.

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25. Mr TAM Yiu-chung expressed support for the proposed conversion projects which he considered cost-effective in the context of CUHK for providing the required hostel places and academic support facilities in a timely manner.

26. Noting that only 69 quarter units in CUHK had been vacated as a result of the implementation of the UGC HFS but proposed projects 41EF and 42EF would involve 94 and 14 quarter units respectively, Miss Emily LAU sought clarification on the apparent discrepancy. DS-G,UGC explained that the six quarter blocks proposed for conversion under the two projects had a total of 108 units, of which 69 had been vacated following implementation of the UGC

HFS. For the purpose of the conversion works, the staff members still occupying the six quarter blocks would be reprovisioned to other quarter blocks of CUHK where there were vacant units. CHUK had confirmed that the reprovisioning would not be a problem.

27. In reply to Miss Emily LAU's enquiry, DS-G,UGC advised that normally, student hostels of UGC-funded institutions were operated on a self-financing basis. At present, the average annual charge for a hostel place in CUHK was \$6,200. CUHK would determine the charges for the hostel places to be provided under the present proposal at a later stage with reference to the prevailing charges for other hostel places in the university.

28. In reply to the Chairman, PAS(EM)1 advised that under the current financial assistance scheme for students of UGC-funded institutions, students might obtain an annual grant of over \$40,000 to cover tuition fees and an annual loan of around \$30,000 to cover living expenses.

Admin 29. At Miss Emily LAU request, the Administration agreed to provide for members' reference a paper setting out the space provision for the existing and planned student hostels of all the UGC-funded institutions in a tabular form.

30. The item was voted on and endorsed. Miss Emily LAU and Mr Edward HO expressed reservation on the proposal.

Clerk 31. At Miss Emily LAU's request, the Chairman said that he would suggest to the FC Chairman that this item be put to vote separately at the FC meeting on 23 June 2000.

PWSC(2000-01)48

1EN

**Development of the campus of
the Hong Kong Institute of
Education**

32. Noting the surplus quarters, Mr Edward HO queried whether the Administration had sought to reduce the number of the staff quarter units to be constructed under the project for the campus of the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIED) when the UGC HFS was implemented in October 1998. Mr LEE Wing-tat shared similar concern.

33. In reply, PAS(EM)1 advised that project 1EN for construction of HKIED's new campus was approved by FC in December 1994. The main construction contracts for staff quarters and student hostels were awarded in December 1995 and early 1996. The staff quarters were ready for occupation in early 2000. When the UGC HFS was implemented in October 1998, construction of the staff quarters was already at an advanced stage, and as eligible staff members were given a period to opt for the UGC HFS, it was not

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possible to ascertain the demand for staff quarters at that time. At Mr Edward HO's request, the Administration agreed to provide a written explanation before the relevant FC meeting on the circumstances that had led to the present proposal for converting recently completed staff quarters into student hostels, instead of revising the scope of project 1EN in the light of the implementation of the UGC HFS. Mr HO also asked for information on the progress status of the construction of the staff quarters at the time of introducing the UGC HFS in October 1998.

34. On the funding arrangement for the provision of student hostels in HKIEd, PAS(EM)1 advised that the Administration had agreed to provide 2 000 student hostels for HKIEd. Under the normal funding arrangement, the Government and the UGC-funded institution concerned would be responsible for 75% and 25% respectively of the funds required for constructing the target provision of student hostels. However, as HKIEd was newly established and might have difficulty in raising sufficient funds within a short period of time, the Administration had agreed to fund the construction of all the 1 500 places while HKIEd would raise funds for the construction of the remaining 500 places at a later stage. Under the present proposal, HKIEd would finance the conversion works to provide the 500 hostel places.

Admin

35. Miss Emily LAU sought details on how the 66 surplus quarter units would be converted into hostel places. In reply, PAS(EM)1 advised that while the conversion works would be financed by private funds, the Administration had agreed with HKIEd that the amount of conversion works should be kept to a minimum. According to the information provided by HKIEd, the hostels would be of a mini-hall style where a group of students would share common facilities within the confines of a quarter unit. CTA/AP, ArchSD and DS-G,UGC advised that the space provision of the hostels would be 25m² per student, inclusive of utility and public areas. HKIEd would determine the charges for the 500 hostel places at a later stage with reference to the prevailing charges for other hostel places in HKIEd. At the request of the Chairman, the Administration agreed to provide the design drawings on the quarters before and after conversion for members' reference.

Admin

36. Mr LEE Wing-tat said that while he accepted that conversion of the 66 surplus staff quarters into 500 student hostels might be a more preferred option than letting out the surplus quarters, he would like to know the estimated rental proceeds that could be generated if the surplus quarters were let out. The Administration agreed to provide the information after the meeting for members' reference.

37. Regarding the occupancy of the remaining staff quarters in HKIEd, DS-G,UGC advised that HKIEd had requested to retain only four quarter units for eligible staff members, and all these units were occupied at present.

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Admin 38. At the request of Miss Emily LAU, the Administration agreed to provide information on the number of students in HKIEd as against the target provision of 2 000 hostel places, and where available, the expressed demand of students for hostel places before the relevant FC meeting.

39. The item was voted on and endorsed.

Clerk 40. At the request of Miss Emily LAU, the Chairman agreed to suggest to the FC Chairman that this item be put to vote separately at the FC meeting on 23 June 2000.

PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME

Upgrading of Projects to Category A

HEAD 703 - BUILDINGS

**PWSC(2000-01)40 275EP Primary school in Area 10,
Tsing Yi**

41. Mr LEE Wing-tat expressed appreciation for the Administration's efficient utilization of the school site to provide more open space and facilities for students. In reply to his enquiry, the Director of Architectural Services confirmed that the provision of a basketball court at the rooftop of the assembly hall block had been adopted in some school projects in the past to provide more open space for student activities.

42. Regarding the planned provision of an amphitheatre and a green corner for the proposed school, the Assistant Director (Special Duties), Education Department (AD(SD),ED) advised that the triangular area of 1 100m² in which the amphitheatre located was originally planned as an open area for the public housing estate nearby. Given the location of the area and that there was already sufficient open space for the housing estate, HA considered it more appropriate to incorporate the area into the boundary of the school site. He further advised that the amphitheatre and the green corner were not standard school facilities but their provision was in line with the policy of providing more open space for student activities through optimizing the characteristics of individual school sites. He also confirmed that the additional triangular open space was on top of the normal open space provision which for this school was some 2 100 m², and the provision was sufficient to meet the planning target of providing each student with 2m² of open space.

43. In reply to Miss Emily LAU's enquiry about the number of spectators that could be accommodated at the amphitheatre, the associated facilities and the cost involved, the Project Manager/1, Housing Department (PM/1,HD)

Admin advised that the amphitheatre was of informal design for casual activities which formed an integral part of the landscaping design for the triangular area where there was a slope at present. HA's consultant would discuss with the school sponsoring body concerned on the detailed design for the area to suit their needs. AD(SD),ED acknowledged that designating the area as an amphitheatre might be a slight exaggeration as the intention was to provide a landscaped open area for a variety of school activities. He advised that the construction cost for this area was about \$500 000 and HA had agreed to bear the cost. At the Chairman's request, the Administration agreed to provide further information on the design for this area when such was finalized.

44. In reply to Mr LEE Wing-tat's enquiry about the access of lorries into the housing estates, PM/1,HD advised that the entrance of the planned lorry carpark nearby would be located at the estate road facing the school site. He confirmed that there was physical separation between the school and the estate road as the school platform was about one storey higher than the estate road.

45. Regarding Miss Emily LAU's concern on whether the proposed school would be subject to the disruption caused by the construction works for the adjacent housing development in Area 10, Tsing Yi, PM/1,HD advised that as the last phase of the housing project would be approaching completion when the school commenced operation, significant impacts of the construction works on the school were not expected.

46. In reply to Mr Edward HO's enquiry about the layout plan at the Enclosure to the discussion paper, AD(SD),ED advised that the area shown in blue, which was the school podium, was about two storeys above the area shown in green and there would be a staircase connecting the two areas.

47. The item was voted on and endorsed.

PWSC(2000-01)41 236ES Secondary school at Po Kong Village Road, Kowloon

48. Mr LEE Wing-tat sought the Administration's clarification on a press report about the lack of pedestrian crossing facilities for access from the neighbouring residential area to the school cluster at Po Kong Village Road (PKVR). In reply, the Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower (2) (PAS(EM)2) advised that the traffic impact study (TIS) conducted for the school projects at PKVR revealed that the additional pedestrian load generated by the school cluster could be adequately absorbed by providing an additional crossing across PKVR. The Traffic and Transport Committee of the Wong Tai Sin District Council (DC) was briefed on the findings of TIS on 2 June 2000. However, some DC members of considered that a footbridge across PKVR should be constructed to separate vehicular

traffic from pedestrian traffic to ensure the safety of students. Having considered the views of DC members, the Administration agreed that it was appropriate to construct a footbridge across PKVR.

49. Mr LEE Wing tat concurred that a footbridge across PKVR should be provided to facilitate safe access to the school cluster and queried why this facility had not been planned in parallel with the school projects at PKVR. In reply, PAS(EM)2 advised that normally, additional transport facilities in support of new schools would be planned in conjunction with the school project(s) concerned based on the findings of the relevant TIS and on the advice of the Transport Department. However, in this case, although the provision of a footbridge had not been recommended in the TIS, the Administration had agreed to provide one having regard to the views of DC members.

50. On Mr SIN Chung-kai's suggestion of constructing a covered carpark at the designated parking area north of the school cluster and making use of the rooftop to provide additional open space for the schools, PAS(EM)2 advised that as the open space provision for the four schools at PKVR would be approximately 4m² per student vis-à-vis the standard provision of 2m² per student, it would not be necessary to provide a cover to the carpark for the sake of making available more open space. PAS(EM)1 also confirmed that all the three new primary schools and the proposed secondary school at PKVR had been allocated to sponsoring bodies in this year's school allocation exercise.

51. While expressing support for the provision of a central landscaped recreational area comprising an athletic track, a football field and two basketball courts for the four schools at PKVR on a shared basis, Miss Emily LAU enquired whether the Administration would also consider providing a swimming pool and other non-standard facilities when planning for other school clusters.

52. In response, PAS(EM)2 advised that whilst the Administration would continue to make the best endeavour to provide a greater variety of facilities for schools and improve school designs, the Administration would also need to examine very carefully the financial implications of providing additional facilities. In this case, provision of the shared non-standard facilities, such as the central football pitch, had already incurred additional cost of about \$8 million. Other additional facilities, such as a swimming pool, which would lead to an even higher cost, therefore would not be considered.

53. On Mr Edward HO's suggestion of constructing a covered walkway linking the parking area and the four schools, PAS(EM)2 advised that although there was no plan to provide such a covered walkway at present, the Administration would advise the school authorities to make use of the emergency vehicular access within the school cluster for loading and unloading

students near the school premises on rainy days.

54. In response to Miss Emily LAU's concern about the projected shortfall of secondary school classrooms, AD(SD),ED confirmed that of the 277 additional secondary school classrooms required by 2002/03, funding proposals for six new secondary schools had either been submitted to this Subcommittee or were under preparation. The Administration would monitor closely the demand and supply of secondary school places and plan for new schools to meet any projected shortfall.

55. The item was voted on and endorsed.

ROAD PROJECTS

HEAD 711 - HOUSING

PWSC(2000-01)42 643TH Trunk Road T7 in Ma On Shan

56. The Chairman said that the present proposal was a re-submission following the withdrawal of PWSC(2000-01)34 on the same project at the meeting on 24 May 2000. In view of members' concern about the provision of different types of noise barriers under the project, an informal briefing had been held on 2 June 2000 for the Administration and the project consultant to explain the reasons for selecting the different types of noise barriers at different sections of the proposed trunk road T7.

57. At the Chairman's request, Dr Raymond HO, who was the convenor of the informal briefing, reported that at the briefing, the Administration and the project consultant had briefed members on the standards used for assessing traffic noise impacts and the criteria for selecting the semi-enclosed or cantilever types of noise barriers at the relevant sections of T7. The discussion focused on the noise impacts on and the proposed provision of noise barriers for Heng On Estate, Symphony Bay and Kam Ying Court. During the discussion, members requested further information on the resulting noise levels and the additional costs of providing semi-enclosed noise barriers instead of cantilever ones at the section of T7 near Kam Ying Court.

58. Mr LAU Kong-wah said that at the informal briefing, he had highlighted the noise impacts on Kam Ying Court and the inadequacy of providing cantilever noise barriers instead of semi-enclosed ones at the section of T7 adjacent to Kam Ying Court given the very low background noise at present. He noted from the supplementary information note PWSCI(2000-01)13 that the Administration had agreed to change the proposed cantilever noise barriers near Kam Ying Court to semi-enclosed ones, and that the additional cost would be some \$19 million. As the Administration had taken

heed of his views, he would support the proposal for the construction of T7.

59. While supporting the provision of semi-enclosed noise barriers at the section of T7 near Kam Ying Court, Mr CHENG Kar-foo was still keen to pursue the provision of semi-enclosed noise barriers at the section of Sai Sha Road near Symphony Bay for the following reasons-

- (a) descending traffic on this road section would generate high noise impacts on Symphony Bay;
- (b) the traffic flow on this section would increase significantly after the commissioning of T7; and
- (c) the additional cost of providing semi-enclosed noise barriers at this section should be less than \$19 million as the section was shorter than the one in question near Kam Ying Court.

60. In response, the Director of Territory Development (DTD) advised that unlike Kam Ying Court, Symphony Bay was already subject to the noise impacts of the traffic on the existing Sai Sha Road and the residential buildings in Symphony Bay were not high-rise. Provision of cantilever noise barriers would be adequate to reduce the noise impacts to an acceptable level. As such, the Administration considered the proposed provision of cantilever noise barriers at this road section adequate.

61. Dr Raymond HO expressed the view that he supported the construction of the proposed T7, but did not consider it justified to change the cantilever noise barriers to semi-enclosed ones for the section near Kam Ying Court, as the provision of cantilever noise barriers was already sufficient in reducing the noise impacts to an acceptable level. He urged that the principle of reducing noise impacts to a level which would not exceed the statutory limit of 70 dB should be consistently applied in the provision of noise mitigation measures in road projects unless there were very special circumstances that warranted exceptional consideration. He also considered that the cost for providing noise mitigation measures in the project, accounting for about 20% of the total project estimate, was too high. He referred to the experience in Japan that since the 1960s, many roads were built with noise barriers. Currently, many people living in Japan found the noise barriers visually unpleasant, and obstructing air circulation as well. According to his understanding, the Japanese authorities were actively exploring alternative noise mitigation measures to replace noise barriers. DTD shared Dr Raymond HO's concern but pointed out that in the absence of better alternatives, noise barriers would continue to be provided to abate excessive noise impacts on noise sensitive receivers.

62. Miss Emily LAU questioned the cost-effectiveness of replacing cantilever noise barriers with semi-enclosed ones at the section of T7 near Kam Ying Court, given that the extent of reduction in noise levels was rather small but an additional cost of \$19 million would be required. In response, DTD advised that the extent of noise reduction varied among different floor levels and different blocks at Kam Ying Court. The figures presented in the supplementary information note only indicated the general situation. There would be significant reduction in the noise impacts for some residential flats, in particular those at Kam Keung House.

63. In reply to Miss Emily LAU's enquiry about the effectiveness of tree planting for noise mitigation purposes, DTD advised that while trees and shrubs would be planted along the road sides of T7, the noise mitigation effect of trees was limited and could not be quantified. Hence, trees were not considered to be noise mitigation measures in public works projects.

64. Noting that the Administration proposed to make use of the provision for contingencies to absorb the additional cost of \$19 million arising from the provision of semi-enclosed noise barriers in place of cantilever ones near Kam Ying Court, Mr CHENG Kar-foo sought clarification on the circumstances where utilization of the provision for contingencies would be allowed. In reply, DTD advised that the provision for contingencies was intended to meet unforeseen financial requirements during the implementation of a project. Normally, the amount of provision for contingencies was about 10% of the project estimate, but the percentage varied from project to project and a higher percentage was usually provided for in complicated projects. In this case, the Administration considered it more appropriate to absorb the additional cost of \$19 million in the provision for contingencies instead of increasing the project estimate correspondingly.

65. Noting that the projected volume/capacity (V/C) ratios at Sai Sha Road (Town Centre Section) and Ma On Shan Road (Town Centre Section) were only 0.44 and 0.76 respectively for year 2006, Miss Emily LAU queried whether the proposed T7, which would cost more than \$2 billion to build, was justified. She recalled that the Administration had emphasized that if T7 was not constructed, a number of road junctions in Ma On Shan (MOS) would not be able to cope with the growing traffic demand. However, Miss LAU had reservation on whether it was cost-effective to build T7 mainly to address the congestion problem at these junctions. Highlighting the need for environmentally sustainable transport planning, Miss LAU also queried whether the proposed T7 had been planned in accordance with the prevailing criteria for building new roads.

66. In response, DTD clarified that the projected V/C ratios for year 2006 set out in the discussion paper had been worked out on the assumption that T7 was constructed as proposed. The Chief Traffic Engineer/New Territories

East, Transport Department (CTE/NTE,TD) supplemented that without the proposed T7, the V/C ratios at Sai Sha Road (Town Centre Section) and Ma On Shan Road (Town Centre Section) by 2006 would be 0.76 and 1.28 respectively. He stressed that the proposed T7 sought to provide a by-pass to accommodate through traffic between Sha Tin, Sai Sha and the northern part of MOS and to address the projected overloading situation at various road junctions in MOS. He referred to the performance of three critical junctions in MOS with and without T7 as set out in paragraph 5 of the discussion paper, and stressed that it was necessary to construct T7 to address the overloading situation effectively. The Administration had considered building flyovers at these junctions but found that this alternative could hardly cope with the growing traffic demand.

67. Miss Emily LAU said that according to her observation in the past, new roads were usually proposed when the V/C ratios of the existing roads concerned reached 1.0 or above. However, in this case, the relevant V/C ratios were relatively low, at only 0.36 and 0.64 at present. She therefore sought elaboration on the policy and criteria for the planning of new roads.

68. In response, DTD explained that MOS was a new development area, in which a number of developments were under construction or planning. The traffic assessments conducted in anticipation of the on-going population intake at these new developments revealed that the existing road network in MOS would not be able to cope with the projected traffic demand. He remarked that instead of starting to plan new roads when existing roads and junctions were overloaded, the Administration considered it prudent to plan and implement the required road projects well in advance so that road facilities could be ready in a timely manner to meet traffic demand. DTD further confirmed that road projects for new development areas were planned on the basis of the projected traffic demand generated by the planned developments in the areas. The proposed T7 was planned on this basis as in the case of many other roads in other new development areas. Miss Emily LAU cautioned that road traffic had serious environmental impacts and the Administration should give due weight to these impacts when considering whether a new road should be built.

69. In this connection, Dr Raymond HO stressed that infrastructure facilities, in particular roads, should be provided in a timely manner to meet projected demand. He pointed out that it would be very disruptive to the residents in the districts/areas concerned if roads were widened or new roads were built after population intake. He therefore supported the advance planning approach adopted for the present proposal on T7.

70. Mr CHENG Kar-foo commented that to avoid lengthy discussion on technical issues and save the time of this Subcommittee when considering this item, the Administration should have provided the information on V/C ratios and on the different types of noise barriers when the proposal was first

Action

Admin discussed at the Transport Panel. The Administration took note of Mr CHENG's view for appropriate action in future.

71. The item was voted on and endorsed.

HEAD 707 - NEW TOWNS AND URBAN AREA DEVELOPMENT

**PWSC(2000-01)45 391TH Completion of Texaco
Road/Tsuen Wan Bypass
interchange and improvement to
Texaco Road, phase I**

72. Miss Emily LAU sought elaboration on why the Administration considered that it was in the Government's interest to settle the remaining 16 outstanding disputes through negotiation rather than proceeding with arbitration on these disputes. She also enquired whether the Administration had received a different legal opinion on the disputes following the completion of the first stage of the arbitration proceedings.

73. In response, DTD advised that each works project entailed certain risks associated with unforeseen circumstances arising from project implementation. The project in question was a complicated one involving the widening of Texaco Road as well as the construction of a flyover running along the existing Texaco Road. The heavy traffic flow on the Texcaco Road had posed unforeseen difficulties to the rock excavation and geotechnical works involved. Problems had also been encountered with underground utilities. In brief, the extent of difficulties and number of problems were greater than those envisaged before the commencement of works. As in the case of many other public works projects, the Government and the contractor had different opinions on how the risks arising from the project in question should be shared and hence the unsettled disputes had been referred to arbitration. At the first stage of the arbitration proceedings on five items under dispute, the arbitrator found three in favour of and two against the Government. Thereafter, the Administration reviewed the initial assessment of the remaining 16 outstanding disputes having regard to the findings in the first stage of arbitration proceedings. Based on the legal and technical advice obtained, the Administration had made a detailed assessment in respect of each of the remaining 16 outstanding disputes, and considered that on balance, it would be in the Government's interest to settle the outstanding disputes through negotiation with the contractor instead of proceeding further with arbitration.

74. As regards legal advice, DTD said that the same legal officer in the Department of Justice had provided advice on the disputes. The legal advice obtained after completion of the first stage of arbitration was that if the Government proceeded further with arbitration on the remaining 16 disputes, it

was likely that the outturn payments determined by the arbitrator together with the legal costs involved would be much higher than the estimated sum required to settle the disputes through negotiation. DTD stressed that it was a normal and sensible practice for the Administration to assess its position from time to time in the course of the arbitration proceedings in order to make a prudent decision in the light of the circumstances.

75. DTD further confirmed that the Administration had negotiated with the contractor and agreed on the relevant settlement payments, subject of course to FC's approval for the necessary funding. He also confirmed that the amount of payments set out in paragraph 13 of the discussion paper covered all the outstanding payments required of the Government, including interest accrued.

76. The item was voted on and endorsed.

BUILDING PROJECTS

HEAD 703 - BUILDINGS

PWSC(2000-01)39	166GK	Customs examination facilities at Container Terminal No. 9, Tsing Yi
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77. Miss Emily LAU said that she appreciated the inconvenience and traffic implications if customs services for Container Terminal No. 9 (CT9) were to be provided in the existing customs facilities in Kwai Chung, which currently serviced CT1 to CT8. She was however concerned that the provision of an additional package of customs facilities servicing only CT9 in Tsing Yi might not be a value-for-money option. She therefore sought information on the scale of the proposed customs facilities and the estimated cargo throughput at CT9 as compared to the existing customs facilities for CT1 to CT8 in Kwai Chung.

78. In reply, the Assistant Commissioner (Control and Intellectual Property), Customs and Excise Department (AC(C&IP),C&ED) advised that as CT1 to CT8 were co-located in Kwai Chung, the centralized customs facilities in Kwai Chung was able to service these container terminals effectively and conveniently. However, as CT9 would be located in Tsing Yi, it was necessary to establish separate customs facilities in its proximity to provide the required services for CT9.

79. On the respective scale of the existing customs facilities in Kwai Chung and the proposed facilities in Tsing Yi, AC(C&IP),C&ED advised that the total gross floor area of the existing facilities in Kwai Chung was 950 m² while that of the proposed facilities in Tsing Yi would be 766 m². The annual handling

capacity of CT1 to CT8 taken together was some 11 million Twenty-foot Container Equivalent Units (TEUs) at present while that of CT9 was estimated to be 2.6 million TEUs.

80. Miss Emily LAU considered that the scale of the proposed customs facilities in Tsing Yi appeared to be highly disproportionate to the relatively low handling capacity of CT9. She therefore queried whether the proposed customs facilities were justified and whether they would also cater for any future container terminals in Tsing Yi.

81. In response, the Administration reiterated the need to provide separate customs facilities for CT9 in Tsing Yi. The Administration further explained that due to the co-location of CT1 to CT8, the customs facilities in Kwai Chung could be centralized and thus could benefit from the economies of scale. The scale of the proposed customs examination facilities in Tsing Yi however could not be proportionally reduced according to the handling capacity of CT9 as some basic facilities had to be provided irrespective of the handling capacity level.

82. The Administration further advised that the proposed customs facilities in Tsing Yi would serve to cope with the increasing demand arising from future growth in cargo throughput. The forecast annual growth in cargo throughput up to 2005 was 6% and from 2006 to 2016, 3%. The total cargo throughput in Hong Kong was forecast to increase to 32 million TEUs by 2016. As the operation of CT1 to CT8 was approaching full capacity, most of the future growth in cargo throughput would be absorbed by CT9.

83. As to whether the proposed customs examination facilities in Tsing Yi would also service other container terminals to be developed in Tsing Yi or in nearby areas, AC(C&IP),C&ED said that as far as he understood, further container terminals, if to be developed, would also be located in Tsing Yi or the areas nearby.

84. As regards the financial implications of the proposed customs facilities on users of customs examination services at container terminals, AC(C&IP),C&ED advised that as the purpose of customs checking and examination was law enforcement, no charge was being imposed for these services at present.

85. The item was voted on and endorsed.

DRAINAGE PROJECT**HEAD 707 - NEW TOWNS AND URBAN AREA DEVELOPMENT****PWSC(2000-01)36****30CD****Village flood protection for Yuen Long, Kam Tin and Ngau Tam Mei, North West New Territories, stage 1 - remainder**

86. Noting that the flood protection works for villages in low-lying areas in Yuen Long, Kam Tin and Ngau Tam Mei had started in early 1990s, Miss Emily LAU sought explanation for the long time taken for the phased flooding protection works and asked whether residents could claim compensation against the Government for the losses they had suffered from flooding.

87. In reply, DTD advised that as the villages were situated in low-lying areas, they were susceptible to flooding during rainstorms. The flooding problem was tackled from two fronts. Firstly, river training and rehabilitation works were carried out to deal with flooding due to overloading of rivers during rainstorms. Secondly, to address the flooding problem attributed to the low-lying topography of individual villages, flood protection embankments, floodwater storage ponds and floodwater pumping stations were constructed for these villages as for the villages in Chuk Yuen Tsuen and Ha San Wai under the present proposal. DTD further explained that due to resource constraints, the Administration needed to prioritize flood protection projects. Basically, priority would be given to villages with a greater number of residents. Where a village was inhabited by a few households only, the Administration might not undertake flood protection works for it as the costs involved would be highly disproportionate to the benefits attained.

88. Miss Emily LAU opined that the Government had the obligation to provide a safe living environment with basic amenities for all residents. In reply to her enquiry, DTD said that there were some several hundreds of residents living in the villages in Chuk Yuen Tsuen and Ha San Wai. At the Chairman's request, he agreed to confirm, subject to the availability of relevant statistics, the number of residents living in the said villages after the meeting.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration has subsequently advised that there are no official statistics on the number of residents living in the said villages.)

89. As regards compensation, DTD advised that according to his understanding, there was no existing legislation which provided for compensation payable by the Government to people affected by flooding. The Administration had no comprehensive record on the economic losses incurred at flooding incidents because these losses were usually not reported.

90. The item was voted on and endorsed.

91. The Chairman thanked members and the Administration for their participation in the deliberation of the Subcommittee during the current session.

92. The meeting ended at 11:10 am.

Legislative Council Secretariat

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