

**Extract from the minutes of meeting of the
Panel on Education held on 18 December 2000**

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IV Reservation of school sites

[Paper No. CB(2)504/00-01(01)]

5. At the invitation of the Chairman, Assistant Director of Education (Special Duties) (ADE(SD)) briefed members on the salient points of the Administration's paper on the subject.

School development on reserved sites

6. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong noted that in order to reduce class sizes of aided primary and secondary schools to 32.5 and 35 respectively, a further 27 primary schools and 49 secondary schools would need to be built. He enquired whether the Administration would seriously consider expediting the development work of the 200 reserved sites for constructing new schools so that the target class sizes could be achieved by the 2007-08 school year.

7. In response, Chief Town Planner/Metro Group (Atg) (CTP/MG(Atg)) said that in preparing town plans and considering comprehensive development projects, the Planning Department (PlanD), in collaboration with the Education Department (ED), had reserved over 200 school sites on the basis of the needs for school in accordance with the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (HKPSG). He pointed out that the majority of these sites were not intended to be readily available in the coming few years because they were planned to serve long-term population growth. Their availability had to tie in with site preparation and infrastructure works to match population in-take. However, the Administration had identified adequate sites to be developed in the next five years, with the remaining sites to be made available gradually through works programmes.

8. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed strong dissatisfaction with the Administration's response. He said that it was unacceptable that scarce land resources earmarked for school development was left idle when school sites were inadequate. Mr CHEUNG requested the Administration to provide the Panel with details of the 200 sites reserved for school development. He urged the Administration to identify the sites which could be developed by 2007-08 and specify the reasons for those which could not be developed before 2007-08. In view of the importance of reducing class sizes in improving primary and secondary school learning environment, the Administration should resolve the

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technical problems in site formation and construction of infra-structural facilities to expedite the construction of the required 27 and 49 primary and secondary schools by 2007-08.

9. CTP/MG (Atg) responded that the majority of the reserved sites were located at new towns or developments such as the former Kai Tak Airport site, the proposed Hung Shui Kiu Strategic Growth Area and the new developments in Tung Chung district. They would have to be made available through reclamation and site preparation works. The Administration had been monitoring the pace of development of these sites to ensure their availability to meet population growth. He added that according to the paper presented, adequate sites had already been reserved to meet the demand for additional school places due to population growth and whole-day primary schooling by 2007-08, and an expanded senior secondary school sector by 2003-04.

10. SEM explained that most of these 200 reserved sites were not readily available in the coming few years broadly because of the following four reasons -

- (a) some sites depended on comprehensive development or redevelopment projects;
- (b) some sites required extensive site formation;
- (c) some sites needed infra-structural facilities; and
- (d) some sites might not be suitably located for purposes such as providing replacement accommodation for schools undergoing in-situ redevelopment.

11. SEM pointed out that depending on the location and the availability of infra-structural facilities, development of schools on these sites could incur substantial public expenditure. The community as a whole would have to determine the priority for the allocation of public resources. Even if all the necessary sites were made readily available, it was doubtful whether the Public Works Programme could accommodate a large number of school development projects within a short period of time. For in-situ redevelopment of schools, the Administration had to give due regard to the will of the parents and students concerned. District Council's support would have to be sought for site development which required infra-structural facilities.

12. Miss Cyd HO opined that LegCo Members with party affiliation should urge their party members who were also District Council members to give priority consideration to school development projects discussed at District Council meetings.

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Redevelopment of existing school premises and school estates

13. Mr SIN Chung-kai was of the view that the Government should formulate a policy on redevelopment of existing schools and provide incentives to facilitate in-situ redevelopment and reprovisioning of existing schools. He also suggested that the Administration should construct more school estates in major development or redevelopment projects in urban areas such as the South East Kowloon Development.

14. SEM responded that the Administration had launched the School Improvement Programme (SIP) in mid-1994 to provide additional space and improve the learning environment of existing public sector schools which were built according to old planning standards. Nevertheless, around 10% - 20% of the existing schools were classified as technically non-feasible for SIP and should be redeveloped or reprovisioned according to current standards of accommodation and design. She undertook to examine whether the South East Kowloon Development could accommodate additional school estates.

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15. Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (3) (DS(EM(3))) supplemented that the Administration would submit two financial proposals to the Finance Committee in January 2001 to seek funding approval for implementing SIP for 80 schools and additional SIP works for 23 schools under phase IV, and to conduct SIP feasibility study for the remaining 342 schools under SIP. Long-term improvement options including in-situ redevelopment or reprovisioning would be considered for schools which were assessed as not suitable for SIP due to site constraints or poor physical state of the school premises.

Space requirement for post-secondary institutions

16. Mr YEUNG Yiu-chung noted the assumption in paragraph 8 of the Administration's paper that the site of a purpose-built post-secondary college should be equivalent to that of a secondary school site. He asked whether the Government had prescribed a standard of space requirement for post-secondary institutions.

17. SEM responded that it would be difficult to prescribe a standard of physical space for post-secondary institutions since it should depend on a number of factors such as the course programmes and layout of the college premises. To facilitate achievement of the policy target, the Administration would encourage post-secondary college operators to consider purchasing conveniently located buildings as college premises, as well as potential providers to maximise the use of their existing land and physical resources to provide the additional student places. She added that the Administration would make references to existing premises of post-secondary institutions wherever appropriate.

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Allocation of land for school development

18. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung questioned why the majority of the reserved sites were located in isolated and undeveloped areas pending basic infrastructural developments. In response to Mr LEUNG's enquiry, CTP/MG (Atg) said that school sites in these areas were reserved in accordance with the HKPSG to meet the demand of the future population in these areas. The construction of schools would then tie in with the programme of the development, the provision of infra-structural facilities and the timing of population in-take. ADE(SD) supplemented that as highlighted in the Administration's paper, sufficient sites had been allocated for meeting new demand for school places due to population growth in different districts up to 2007-08. In addition, adequate number of sites had been reserved for major policy commitments such as achieving the 60% target of whole-day primary schooling by 2002-03 and expanding senior secondary education to all secondary three students who had the ability and wish to continue with their study by 2003-04.

19. Miss Emily LAU asked whether sufficient school sites had been reserved for school development up to 2007-08. She pointed out that she was given the impression at previous meetings with the Administration that in bidding for new school sites, ED would have to compete for land allocation. SEM responded that with the support of PlanD and other government departments, sufficient sites had been reserved to meet the short-term requirements for new schools. ED would continue to work closely with the PlanD to bid for more sites to meet future need of other education initiatives such as provision of more post-secondary places and reduction of class size.

20. Miss Emily LAU asked about the priority for allocation of sites to schools. She stressed that as education was crucial to the future development of Hong Kong, school development should be given priority insofar as allocation of land resources was concerned. She urged ED to co-ordinate with relevant departments to ensure sufficient supply of new schools so as to materialize the commitments as highlighted in the Chief Executive's Policy Address 2000.

21. CTP/MG (Atg) explained that in reserving land for open space, roads, housing, education, etc., the PlanD would endeavour to meet the demand of various departments to aim at achieving a "balanced development". However, he was unable to give a definitive undertaking to Miss Emily LAU's question about allocating priority of land resources to schools because there were policy implications.

22. Miss Emily LAU expressed disappointment that no representative from the Planning and Lands Bureau and other related bureaux and departments was attending the meeting. At the Chairman's request, SEM undertook to provide the Panel with details on the reserved school sites including their tentative

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availability dates and factors affecting their availability for further discussion at the next meeting. She pointed out that the Secretary for Planning and Lands supported allocation of additional sites for school development. However, availability of the reserved sites for school development hinged on various factors as described in paragraph 10. She called upon LegCo members to support in this regard. Miss LAU also requested SEM to co-ordinate attendance of relevant bureaux and departments for the next meeting.

23. The Chairman concluded the discussion by saying that members were in support of whole-day primary schooling, reduction of class sizes of primary and secondary schools, and the principle of vicinity for provision of primary school places. The Panel would continue the discussion at the next meeting when detailed information on the reserved sites for school development was available.

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Legislative Council Secretariat

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