

**Extract from the minutes of meeting of the
Panel on Education held on 15 January 2001**

X X X X X X X X

Action

V. Reservation of school sites

[LC Paper No. CB(2)666/00-01(01)]

21. The Chairman informed members that the Panel had requested the Administration at the meeting on 18 Dec 2000 to provide detailed information on the availability of reserved school sites for further discussion at today's meeting.

22. SEM said that the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) had co-ordinated with relevant bureaux and departments and provided estimate on the tentative availability of the 234 reserved sites for school development, as well as the factors affecting the availability of these sites as detailed in the paper [Paper No. CB(2)666/00-01(01)]. The Administration had conducted a review of the availability of these sites. The review tentatively suggested that, subject to timely resolution of factors affecting the availability, 51 of them might be made available for development of schools/post -secondary colleges in or before 2005.

23. SEM further said that the Education Department (ED) would continue to collaborate with relevant departments to further explore the possibility of advancing the availability of the reserved and other sites as far as practicable. If this could be achieved, there would be adequate sites to construct more post-secondary colleges, and new schools for in-situ re-development and reprovisioning of existing schools which were technically non-feasible to be included under the School Improvement Programme (SIP) before 2005.

24. Deputy Secretary for Planning and Lands (Lands and Planning) (DS/PL(LP)) supplemented that the Planning and Lands Bureau (PLB) would have to allocate sites to meet the competing needs of the community in education, housing, health and other areas. He estimated that around 100 sites, involving some 60 to 90 hectares of land, were required to cater for the needs for whole-day primary schooling and reprovisioning of existing schools which could not be improved in-situ. He pointed out that there would be sufficient supply of sites for school development in new towns and developments, but not in urban districts. PLB would continue to collaborate with relevant departments to see if more sites could be identified for school development.

Availability of reserved school sites

Action

25. Mr WONG Sing-chi noted with concern that the reserved sites for development of 15 primary and 14 secondary schools in Kwu Tung and Fanling North would only be available after 2010. He expressed doubt as to whether the available dates of the reserved sites as stated in the paper were up-to-date. He pointed out that according to information provided to the North District Council, phase I of the public estates in these districts would be ready for occupation in 2006. He asked how the Administration would plan for the provision of sufficient primary and secondary school places to cater for the future population growth in Kwu Tung and Fanling North.

26. DS/PL(LP) responded that the development of the reserved sites listed in the paper were planned in accordance with the forecast population growth in the districts concerned. The Administration would review the schedules of development on an on-going basis and would advance the schedule for individual sites in the light of the actual population growth in the districts concerned. Assistant Director of Planning/Metro supplemented that residential sites in Kwu Tung North were unlikely to be available in 2006. She undertook to ascertain the information and revert to the Panel.

Adm

27. Mr WONG Sing-chi queried how the Administration could secure sufficient sites for reducing primary school and secondary school class sizes, given that it might not even have adequate supply of sites to meet new demand for school places arising from population growth in individual districts. SEM responded that the Administration was committed to providing adequate school places in accordance with the population growth in each district. She added that the shortfall of 100 school sites identified in paragraph 24 had not included the demand for reducing class sizes. The Chairman remarked that a greater number of school sites would be needed in order to implement the initiative of reduction of class size.

Priority in allocation of sites for school development

28. Miss Emily LAU enquired about the priority given by the Administration to school development in its allocation of sites. She doubted whether the Administration had acted in line with the consensus reached at previous discussions of the Public Works Subcommittee that allocation of sites for school development should be given priority consideration since education was paramount to the future development of Hong Kong. She also asked whether the Administration would consider re-zoning sites allocated for other purposes such as residential developments which had not been utilized for a considerable period of time.

29. In response, DS/PL(LP) said that in preparing town plans and designing comprehensive development projects, the Planning Department (PlanD) would reserve school sites on the basis of the needs for community services in accordance with the specifications laid down in the Hong Kong Planning

Action

Standards and Guidelines (HKPSG). To provide additional school sites arising from new policy commitments, the Administration would review sites which had been reserved for other purposes but for various reasons had not been developed or redeveloped, and consider re-zoning them for school development. He assured members that the PlanD and the Town Planning Board (TPB) would continue to review and identify sites which could be re-zoned for school development. Meanwhile, the Administration would also consider converting industrial and commercial buildings into temporary college premises, if these buildings were not cost-effectively deployed for their intended purposes. DS/PL(LP) added that re-zoning of sites reserved for residential developments would have to be jointly discussed by the relevant bureaux, departments and TPB thoroughly.

30. Miss Emily LAU said that today's discussion would have conveyed a clear message to relevant bureaux that school development should have high priority in allocation of land resources.

Procurement of sites for school development

31. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong asked how the Administration would co-ordinate the efforts of relevant bureaux and departments to procure more sites for school education. He also asked how the Administration could resolve the 10 major problems affecting the availability dates of sites reserved for school development. He pointed out that as indicated in Annex B to the paper, extensive site formation, infra-structural facilities, and the feasibility study for comprehensive development/redevelopment were the three main considerations for determining the availability dates of the 234 reserved sites. He urged the Administration to co-ordinate the best efforts of related bureaux and departments to bring forward the development of the 33 and 76 sites which under the current schedule could only be available in 2005 and 2010 respectively.

32. DS/PL(LP) said that the explanatory note under Annex B aimed to specify the 10 major factors affecting the availability dates of the 234 reserved sites. There were other considerations such as the work schedule and progress of developments in the vicinity of the sites. He pointed out that wherever practicable, the Administration would seek the necessary funding support from the Finance Committee/Public Works Subcommittee to bring forward the development of reserved sites. He undertook to provide periodic reports on the latest developments of these sites, but pointed out that co-ordination of departmental efforts was essential to effective use of land resources for school development. He considered that a working group under the lead of EMB comprising representatives from relevant bureaux and departments including the Works Bureau and Housing Bureau should be established to co-ordinate deployment of sites for school development.

Action

33. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong urged the Administration to procure more land resources for school development by way of the five approaches in paragraph 5 of the paper. He stressed that the Administration should ensure effective co-ordination of departmental efforts to review sites for re-zoning purposes, identify vacant land adjacent to or close to schools not suitable for SIP and consider construction of school villages in less build-up areas. He pointed out that many sites reserved for departmental use were left undeveloped for years.

Adm 34. DS/PL(LP) said that the Administration had an internal monitoring mechanism to ensure effective use of land resources. Departments would be required to provide explanations on sites reserved for their use but which had not been developed three years after allocation. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong requested that a list of the reserve sites which had been left undeveloped be provided to the Panel for information.

35. Miss CHAN Yuen-han echoed Mr CHEUNG's concern, saying that it was imperative for the Administration to appoint a bureau to oversee the review and to ensure effective re-deployment of sites for school development.

36. SEM said that ED was exploring the feasibility of establishing an inter-departmental mechanism on school development projects. She pointed out that the establishment of a higher level co-ordination team among various bureaux and departments to review and identify existing sites suitable for school development would take time. For the time being, PLB and EMB would review the feasibility of re-zoning sites for school development and identify vacant land for school expansion. She also urged members to assist in soliciting the support of District Councils on school development proposals, particularly those which were considered as immature due to various reasons such as inadequate transport facilities.

Adm 37. At members' request, the Administration should provide in three months' time an update on the reserved school sites, including their tentative availability dates and responsible department(s) to resolve the problems affecting their availability for members' reference. Members agreed that "Reservation of school sites" should tentatively be included as an agenda item for the regular meeting in April 2001 as a follow-up discussion.

X X X X X X X X