

For information
on 23 March 2004

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON
PLANNING, LANDS AND WORKS**

**Progress Report on Development of the
West Kowloon Cultural District**

Purpose

This paper reports on the progress of the Development of the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) since the Motion Debate on 26 November 2003, and informs Members of the planned arrangements for enhanced involvement of the public in the Invitation For Proposals (IFP) exercise.

Background

2. During the Council's meeting on 26 November 2003, the Administration announced that the deadline for submission of Proposals on the development of the WKCD would be extended by three months, i.e. to 19 June 2004. The purpose of the extension is to allow more time for the intending proponents to better prepare their proposals on this proposal. The Administration would also be able to use the extended time to further consult the public, and in particular the arts and cultural community as well as the professional bodies.

Consultations in the last four months

3. During the last four months, the Administration had carried out extensive consultation. HPLB and HAB respectively conducted discussions with various professional institutes and a large number of arts and cultural organizations. The Town Planning Board (TPB) had also been consulted. The views they offered are being compiled and will be posted on the project website shortly, for reference by the intending proponents.

4. The feedback has been most useful. Some of the views relate to the IFP process and after careful consideration, we intend to introduce some

additional measures to step up public involvement. These new arrangements will be described in the following paragraphs. Other specific comments on technical aspects such as the canopy, the automated people mover, design and mode of operation of the core arts and cultural facilities are helpful for us to refine the assessment guidelines for the relevant sections of the proposals.

Enhanced arrangement under the Town Planning Process

5. Concerns were previously expressed that with the entire site zoned “Other Specified Uses” annotated “Arts, Cultural, Commercial and Entertainment” with an extensive range of permitted uses as of right, the TPB would lose much of its planning control over the future development of the site. We have explained to TPB and the public that that would not be the case. The above zoning is only intended to give flexibility to the intending proponents in coming up with the most optimal scheme for the Administration’s consideration. Once a preferred scheme is adopted, its development parameters would be incorporated into the relevant Outline Zoning Plan (OZP). In order to instill greater public confidence in the Administration’s intention to subject the WKCD to the statutory town planning control, we have written to the TPB re-affirming the steps for involving the TPB in the planning process of the WKCD development.

6. Firstly, when a preferred proposal has been identified after going through the assessment and negotiation process, it will be submitted to the TPB for consideration and agreement. In other words, acceptability of the preferred scheme has to be obtained from the TPB. Similarly, the preferred scheme will be presented to the Legislative Council for comments. After incorporating the views of the TPB and the Legislative Council, a final package will then be submitted to Chief Executive in Council for approval.

7. Secondly, after the selected scheme is accepted and a Provisional Agreement is signed with the successful proponent, the Administration will submit the development parameters of the selected scheme, including the maximum gross floor area and plot ratio for domestic and non-domestic development, maximum building heights and open space requirements to the TPB for inclusion in the South West Kowloon OZP. The amended OZP will then be subject to the normal statutory process in accordance with the Town Planning Ordinance, including objection hearing and further amendments, if necessary. The final Project Agreement will not be submitted to the Chief Executive in Council for approval until all statutory procedures, including the approval of the OZP, have been duly completed.

8. After the Project Agreement is signed based on an approved OZP, any future change to the development parameters will require going through the statutory process again, thereby ensuring TPB's control over the development as the WKCD project progresses.

9. The TPB has welcomed these arrangements. The proposed process has also been clearly stated in the Explanatory Statement of the relevant draft OZP.

Public Consultation on Proposals Received

10. In our consultations over the past few months, different sectors of the community have expressed a clear wish for greater public involvement in the selection process. Whilst generally accepting that the actual assessment of proposals received should be done by professional civil servants, they felt that instead of being presented with the selected proposal, the public should be given the opportunity to view all the proposals received, so that they can offer their comments. This will ensure that the proposal eventually selected will be better received by the public and has greater public ownership.

11. After careful consideration, the Administration agrees that, without undermining the integrity of the assessment exercise, there is scope for involving the public further so that their views can also be taken into account in the selection of a preferred proposal. The Administration intends to conduct public consultation by way of an exhibition of the proposals received. In practice, all proposals which have satisfied the mandatory requirements will be put up for exhibition. Exhibits prepared by the proponents themselves showing details of the technical aspects of the proposals and the proposed arrangements regarding operation, maintenance and management of the arts and cultural facilities will be displayed. Since commercially sensitive information is involved, only the key elements regarding the financial aspects will be released. Public forums will be held during the exhibition period, so as to solicit views from the public on the different proposals.

12. This arrangement to actively engage the public in a selection process is clearly not an easy task and will inevitably lengthen the process. It is also likely to invite intense lobbying by the various proponents resulting in heated public debates. The process would involve the compilation of many diversified views, some may even be conflicting with others. Careful management is required and the Administration is working out a mechanism whereby the views collected could be systematically organized and rationally assessed.

Development Timetable

13. With the extension of the deadline for submission of proposals, the extra time needed to conduct public consultations, including deliberations by the TPB and consultations with the LegCo, the anticipated construction start date will be deferred to April 2007. Consequently, the core arts and cultural facilities are expected to come on stream in phases starting from early 2011 to late 2013.

14. Members will be kept informed of progress on the development.

Housing, Planning and Lands Bureau

March 2004