

Press Release



No Change to Single Package approach and Canopy Requirement in WKCD

There is no change to the mandatory requirements set out in the Invitation For Proposals (IFP) for the West Kowloon Cultural District project, which includes "the provision of the canopy covering at least 55 % of the Development Area", a government spokesman said today (April 28).

"There is also no question of the government changing the single package approach in taking forward this very important project for the benefit of the community. Indeed, apart from extending the deadline for submission by three months to June 19, 2004, there has been no significant changes to the fundamental requirements in the IFP since its launch in September, 2003.

"The IFP document requires proponents to submit detail design of the canopy and the cost related to its construction. As stated in the Important Note of the IFP, proposals which fail to comply with any of the mandatory requirements will be treated as non-conforming proposals and will not be considered further," the spokesman said.

"We remain of the view that there are no particular design problems with the canopy. Proponents are required to carry out technical studies to address special design consideration and maintenance plan for the canopy detailing the arrangements for the cleaning, maintenance and repair.

"Of course, we will have to see the proponents' proposals before knowing how much the canopy will cost and to assess it in the overall financial scheme," the spokesman added.

At this stage, the government does not believe that the technical or financial aspects of the canopy requirement will affect the viability of the project.

Referring to previous statements and explanations by the government, including the detailed response by the Chief Secretary for Administration during the motion debate on the West Kowloon Cultural District on 26 November, 2003, the spokesman reiterated that the single package approach was the optimal way forward and was in the wider public interests of Hong Kong.

At the meeting of the Legislative Council Planning, Lands and Works Panel yesterday, government representatives explained that the funding arrangements for the West Kowloon Cultural District were entirely proper and appropriate. Conceived as an integrated and financially self-supporting project to be designed, built and operated by the private sector, no public expenditure is involved and hence there is no need to approach the Legislative Council for funding approval.

"The government is committed to conducting the selection exercise in a fair and open manner. We have enlisted the assistance of the ICAC in drawing up the selection process. Any allegations that the government is entering deals with private developers are totally unfounded," the spokesman said.

At yesterday's Panel meeting, the government took the initiative to update Members on progress made in various aspects since the motion debate on November 26, 2003. Specifically:

* Extensive consultations had been conducted with professional institutes and a wide spectrum of the arts and cultural community over the last four months. A summary report of the consultation process had been posted on the project website on April 8, 2004.

* Clear understanding had been reached with the Town Planning Board to enhance its planning control and development parameters of the selected scheme such as plot ratio, building height, etc. would be incorporated into the statutory Outline Zoning Plan subject to the usual plan making process with public participation.

* Greater public involvement would be achieved through forums and public consultations by way of exhibition of those proposals that complied with the mandatory requirements, after completion of the internal assessment process.

"Since the government had on many occasions clearly explained the sound policy reasons for its adoption of the current mode of development of the West Kowloon Cultural Development project, we were quite puzzled and naturally disappointed that the Panel had passed a motion expressing objection to the land and funding arrangements for the project," the spokesman said.

"The government will continue to report to LegCo progress on the project and consult Members at various key stages of the project development," the spokesman added.

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