



香港工程師學會

THE HONG KONG INSTITUTION OF ENGINEERS

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By Post and By Fax at 2121 0420

28 January 2005

Clerk to the Panel on Planning, Lands and Works
Legislative Council Secretariat
3/F Citibank Tower
3 Garden Road
Central

Dear Sirs

**Re: Panel on Planning, Lands and Works – Rescheduling of the special meeting on
6 January 2005**

Thank you for your letter of 7 January 2005 inviting the Institution to attend the meeting of the captioned subject on 31 January 2005 and to put forth our views on the WKCD Development Project.

We are pleased to submit herewith our views on the Project in respect of the areas, which are of concern to our members. The HKIE recognises the importance and benefits of the Project to the community at large and to the employment situation of the construction industry. Our members' concerns and views are elaborated in the enclosure for your consideration.

Yours sincerely

Ir Dr Greg C Y WONG
Vice President



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Enclosure

The West Kowloon Cultural District Development Project

Issues of Concern

Background

The WKCD Development project has brought about immense concern to the community as well as the engineering profession. In this respect, the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers (HKIE) as a professional body has been keeping a close watch on the latest development of the project. The Task Force on the WKCD Development Project is formed to look into the related matters of the project and to put forth initial observations from the engineering viewpoint in the facilitation for further discussion.

Observations

While the HKIE considers that the project is one of the most important urban development projects to be implemented by the Government which will bring benefits to the community as a whole, including the cultural and tourism development as well as the employment situation of the construction industry, three main subjects of the project are of our concern:

1. Canopy

1.1 Maintenance

Noting the scale of the canopy as outlined in the proposals of the three screened-in Proponents, the HKIE is concerned about the implications for the maintenance cost of the canopy after 30 years of operation, as that will be the time for the Government to take over the overall management and use public coffers for maintenance and refurbishment of the District facilities. Further details on the maintenance cost to be borne by the Government after 30 years of operation should be provided to facilitate an objective and rational discussion on the proposals. As a related issue, due consideration should be given on working out contingency measures for maintenance and on how to replace parts of the canopy. Information in this respect is not available in the proposals.

1.2 Green House Effect

It has been noted that the canopy which will serve to provide natural daylight and sheltering for an extremely large area (ever built) will be made and composed of translucent or transparent sheet materials. The HKIE is concerned with the possible Green House Effect. This is well-known phenomenon which results from the penetration of infra-red radiation of short wavelength and re-radiation from internal surfaces covered inside the canopy of infra-red radiation of longer wavelength which will then be trapped inside the covered space. Such trapped energy will give rise to temperature increase underneath the canopy. In view of possible energy

saving by canopy design in this case, the adverse effects of such phenomenon and hence its contribution should be properly and scientifically addressed.

1.3 Functionality

Apart from providing shade and shelter for the facilities below, the canopy is designed to make the complex a new Hong Kong icon. Information on its benefits for the community should be given to facilitate a general evaluation of the project by the general public.

Landmark is not necessarily restricted to the canopy option. Many of the landmarks in Hong Kong and many other cities in the world are not expensive man-made features and many were gradually developed into a landmark feature, because of their historical values or some memorable historical events of human interest or content or folklore.

1.4 Value Management

Based on the same premise, we would suggest the Government to take a thoroughgoing review on the canopy in terms of value management so as to give a more objective picture regarding the value of the canopy for further public discussion.

1.5 Structural Design Aspect

The professional engineers in Hong Kong are capable of making a feasible technical solution so that the signature design feature could be put in place by local expertise. There are still many other issues related to the canopy structure in need of detailed address and we hope that more local engineers can be involved in the design and construction.

2. Necessity of Property Developments

We accept that it is not realistic to expect 40ha of prime site to be devoted solely to cultural facilities, and an appropriate portion of the site should be reserved for residential/commercial developments both for the purpose of financing the cultural hardware and software and to bring activities, people and vibrancy to this district. A well balance between the cultural development and the property development should be maintained in line with the development intensity of the public consultations on “Hong Kong 2030: Planning Vision and Strategy”.

3. Procurement of the WKCD Development Project

We consider that the procurement of the WKCD Development Project should follow the current procurement system as adopted by the Government for the implementation of infrastructure projects, which is formulated on the basis of transparency, open and fair competition and public accountability. As to the canopy, we consider it practical for the construction of the canopy be made by different developers with comprehensive

control briefs and clear requirements provided by the Government. On the other hand, we appreciate that under such circumstances there would be a possible impact on the implementation programme and would need further deliberation by the Government.

It is noted that the plot ratio as set by the Government is only an indication on the preferred scale of commercial and residential development for the project. The plot ratios of the three screened-in proposals are well above this reference point. Without a set of objective assessment criteria and weightings in terms of technical issues, operations, maintenance and financial arrangements, the selection of the proposals with different concept plans, modes of operation and plot ratios would end up in scepticism about the fairness of the selection process. The plot ratio is likely to be reduced from what had been proposed and consequential reduction in financial offer from the successful bidder can be controversial and the current mechanism for assessment is not clear on this decisive issue.

Conclusion

Despite the above concerns, the HKIE recognises the importance and benefits of the WKCD Development Project to the community at large and is supportive of the development, both cultural and residential/commercial, of the WKCD Development Project. The Institution would like to urge the Administration to expedite the execution of the project on schedule, whether under single or multiple developments, because this project is beneficial to the community as a whole. The implementation of the project would help to alleviate the employment situation of the construction industry.