

Hong Kong, November 4, 2005

Panel on Planning, Lands and Works
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central, Hong Kong
(Fax: 2869-6794 / email: cshiu@legco.gov.hk)

Re: Future development on the Tamar site

Urban and Transport Planning for Central and Wanchai's Harbour-front.

Honorable Chair and Members,

In your deliberations over the development of Tamar we urge you to consider the following questions.

1. **Should new peak-time traffic drivers be located in the middle of the narrow traffic funnel of Hong Kong Island?**
 - a. Studies presented by the Transport Department to the Expert Panel Forum convened by the Harbour-front Enhancement Committee, show that the Gloucester Road/Connaught Road, together with the new P2 and the Central Wanchai Bypass, will reach capacity (v/c of 0.9) in 2016. Beyond this we breach the safety margin and risk grid lock – and this time there is no solution. With the presumption against reclamation we now face for the first time in 150 years of development an absolute constraint on adding further road capacity along the North shore.
 - b. The Expert Panel has published a report including a recommendation to stem property development in line with the transport capacity. (http://www.harbourfront.org.hk/eng/content_page/doc/report_of_the_expert_panel.pdf)
 - c. *Legislative Council Members may wish to obtain more data on the sustainability of transport infrastructure prior to committing to new peak – time traffic generating developments on Tamar and in Central. The traffic demand estimated by the Transport Department is based on known and committed projects, but may not include redevelopment of the Central Market, Lower Albert Road, Central Police Station, or new URA developments in Central, or ongoing redevelopment of private property in Central and Wanchai.*

2. How can the land use and zoning of Tamar and Central undo the shortcomings of the Central and Wanchai harbour-front?

- a. The Central and Wanchai harbour-front – the area between Victoria Park and the Macau Ferry Pier, from the Gloucester/Connaught Road Corridor to the harbour – suffers a number of problems:
 - i. A pedestrian unfriendly environment – near dead-zones except for isolated pockets around the Star Ferry, Central Ferry Piers and Bauhinia Square;
 - ii. Little diversity in economic activity, job or business opportunity.
- b. The main causes become evident by comparing the urban and transport plan of the harbour-front with the area south of the Connaught/Gloucester Road corridor:
 - i. Extreme large plot sizes versus smaller plot sizes;
 - ii. Government and institutional uses dominate versus residential and a diversity of commercial users – from private operators, to small and medium enterprises and large commercial institutions;
 - iii. Little interaction between the buildings and pedestrians at ground level versus the more traditional shop fronts in the vibrant areas;
 - iv. Wide roads with very few pedestrian crossings at ground level versus signaling and pedestrian crossings.
- c. *Close study of the zoning for Tamar and Central show an aggravation of these problems for the last remaining open land in the harbour-front. The celebrated Civic Square, promenade, groundscraper and pedestrian deck do little to alleviate the issues identified!*

3. A harbour-front dominated by a grid of high-capacity surface roads?

- a. *Close study of the plans for Tamar and Central show the creation of a 'grid of highways' segregating the harbour-front in large plots with singular land uses, inaccessible at ground level (incl. the planned new Legislative Council).*
- b. This grid consists of high-capacity roads running east/west:
 - i. Connaught/Gloucester Road Corridor
 - ii. New P2/Convention Avenue
 - iii. Ling Wu Road/Fenwick Pier Street/...
- c. and high-capacity roads running north/south:
 - i. Man Yiu Avenue
 - ii. Tim Wa Avenue
 - iii. Tim Mai Avenue
 - iv. Performing Arts Avenue
 - v. Fenwick Street
 - vi. Fleming Road.

- d. *LegCo members are invited to consider the environment and activity at street level around IFC, Exchange Square, Convention Plaza Complex, Great Eagle/Harbour Centre, and then compare this with Wanchai, Causeway Bay and Central, south of the Connaught Road/Gloucester Road corridor. Or, to consider walking out of the Academy of Performing Arts after a show – our harbour-front lacks vibrancy and is unpleasant if not impossible and hazardous to navigate in any direction at ground level!*
- 4. Should land around the harbour first and foremost be used to promote marine and harbour-front activities, generating new and unique jobs?**
- a. By prioritizing land uses which promote activities benefiting from the harbour and harbour-front location, jobs will be created which are new, unique and permanent, providing a positive and long term impetus to the economy.
- b. *Given the acute limited land available around the harbour, Members may query whether locating Government offices elsewhere will free up scarce land for the creation of new permanent jobs around the harbour?*
- 5. Is the planned distribution of key developments around the harbour sustainable?**
- a. A review of the available land around the harbour (West Kowloon, Hung Hom, Kai Tak, North Point Estate, Oil Street, Tamar, Central Reclamation 3, Sheung Wan waterfront) and considering the neighbouring land uses and existing and planned transport infrastructure in each area provides a guide for the type of land and marine uses most suitable for each.
- b. *Members may wish to query whether off-peak time traffic drivers such as culture and leisure facilities are better suited for Tamar, than peak-time traffic drivers such as government and commercial offices? And whether cruise terminals are better suited on West Kowloon rather than the tip of Kai Tak's runway? Is there a more sustainable distribution being ignored?*
- 6. Has our urban and transport planning taken the impact and consequences of the 'no reclamation' decision into account?**
- a. For 150 years, ever since the first ten lots of beach front in Central were sold, Hong Kong has grown and developed through reclamation. The 'no reclamation' decision is a major disruption in the environment in which the government operates. However, there has been no change in Hong Kong's urban and transport planning mechanisms, institutions and procedures to take account of this new constraint.
- b. *When the plans for Central and Wanchai were developed, this constraint did not exist. Members may wish to query how the Administration has adjusted its planning mechanisms, development and transport policies, and zoning to ensure our city and harbour are world class and sustainable given the new constraint?*

7. What needs to be done to move forward decisively?

- a. As government recognizes that West Kowloon requires a specific statutory body to manage its development, it should also recognise that the regeneration of the harbour-front around Victoria Harbour as a whole requires an equally 'forceful initiator and guiding hand to promote and co-ordinate development' – this can be achieved by expanding the West Kowloon Authority to a 'Harbour Agency'.
- b. The Harbour Agency will need to take into account existing proposals, subjecting these to a stringent review, so as to produce an integrated vision, urban design and marine use plan. It should also be responsible for the planning and coordination of the work necessary to deliver the vision in an efficient and time effective manner, working with Harbour-front Enhancement Committee for public consultation, coordinating the relevant government departments and seeking approvals from the Town Planning Board.
- c. To lead this Agency, we believe that a Deputy Chief Executive should be appointed, who would have experience in innovative strategic planning and development.

8. We urge the Honorable Members of the Legislative Council to request and commence a review of the plans and zoning for the Central and Wanchai harbour-front PRIOR TO committing to the proposed development for Tamar. A review of planning briefs alone will not resolve the concerns identified above.

Herewith we so submit for your consideration,

Yours sincerely,

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