

Speaking note of Mrs Margaret BROOKE

Central and Tamar – 9 February 2006

Thank you for the opportunity to speak and firstly, I would like to confirm that the following are personal views of my husband, Nicholas Brooke and myself and do not necessarily reflect those of any specific organisation. We regard Hong Kong as our home and care about its future and the legacy that today's decisions will leave behind.

The Central Waterfront should be planned within the context of the harbour front as a whole. This means that no individual project should go ahead, including the development of the Tamar site, **without first being evaluated and assessed as part of an integrated and comprehensive harbour plan** – and no such plan yet exists. All development on the waterfront, no matter where, **should also be bound by the HEC's Harbour Planning Principles.**

Government has claimed that the relevant OZP for the Central Waterfront went extensive public consultation between 1998 and 2000. At this time the consultation and participation process was very different to that in place today (not to mention that many in the community were too busy trying to survive the Asian financial crisis to focus on community affairs). We would call on Legco members to request details from Government as to exactly **who within the community was consulted, and how**, so that such claims of extensive public consultation can be substantiated.

Government also claims that the existing plans were "re-examined and re-affirmed by the Town Planning Board in August 2005 and that they decided that the land use zonings on the OZP were appropriate". This review, however, was actually, I believe, a response to various re-zoning requests which were submitted with the objective of, firstly, limiting the current reclamation exercise and secondly, reviewing what development should go on any such reclamation. While the TPB saw no justification in reviewing the reclamation at that stage (matters were felt to have gone too far) they did see merit in several of the development concepts put forward and directed that several planning briefs should be reviewed – this surely indicates that the Board did

not view the current plans as being entirely satisfactory and that further review was required. This being the case, **we would urge members to call upon Government to request the HEC to conduct a full review of the current plans, with widespread public participation**, with the objective of submitting revised plans to the TPB for their consideration and approval.

In so far as the Tamar site is concerned, the original Exco approval for its development as Government offices was secured in 2002 with the relevant OZP being approved in 2000. The make up of the community have been evolving significantly over the last few years, with many more people now regarding Hong Kong as their long term home as against a stepping stone to somewhere better. This has resulted in far greater emphasis now being given by the community to quality of life issues and it is therefore only appropriate that previous approvals, which have not yet been implemented and which were made in the context of social conditions which are no longer wholly applicable, should be reviewed and amended to take account of changing aspirations and concerns. **There is no requirement on Government to implement approvals that are several years old simply because they are there.**

There does not appear to have been any in depth study undertaken to support Government's claim that it needs more office space than could be provided by redevelopment or a thorough refurbishment (either of which could well increase efficiency, not to mention facilities and services) of the existing offices on Lower Albert Road and in Murray Building. In situ redevelopment is, we understand, considered impractical due to "office space constraints" and the "presence of a large number of mature trees". However, without revealing any confidences, we ourselves were involved in a study prior to 1997 which **demonstrated that redevelopment was feasible on a phased basis and with a significant increase in floor area.**

There does at present appear to be any precise information as to who would be occupying new offices in Tamar if provided. This is not the way a city that prides itself on its business acumen should be proceeding – **a full feasibility study is required which clearly demonstrates Government's office needs and the costs associated with meeting them under the various available scenarios** – redevelopment, full refurbishment, new provision, etc. Such a study should also

examine other sites and produce a cost benefit analysis for each – this would enable a transparent decision process within which properly informed decisions could be taken.

Lastly, we do not consider that Government has demonstrated any real rush for new offices – the fact that the Tamar site has been formed for some years is not a rationale in itself – nor have they demonstrated that such offices, if required, have to be on Tamar rather than elsewhere. Similarly, there is nothing to show that there is real demand for additional large scale commercial development on the Central Waterfront. We would urge members **to resist being pressured into making any immediate decisions that may be regretted later or into voting funds to facilitate the implementation of the current development proposals** – full needs assessments, financial feasibility studies and cost/benefit analyses are required before any properly informed decisions can and should be taken.