

Submission to Legislative Council's Tamar Panel, Planning Committee

CB(1)1249/05-06(10)

2 April 2006

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Tamar & Central Reclamation Roads & Traffic

There is a perception by some people that opposition to the Government's plans for the Tamar site is 'anti-development'. Such a charge is easy to make as these two words are so easily combined together; they bluntly slip off the tongue and are meant to quickly halt any debate, argument or intellectual enquiry – it is however a simple, simplistic statement that emphasises the negative but categorically does NOT address any of the issues that the word 'development' begs answered.

The word 'development' implies progress, success, achievement - aims that we all, every single person in this Chamber today, aspire to. But development has limits – just as one piece of sweet chocolate cake is enjoyable to eat; eating 25 pieces will make us sick – so development, and developments such as Tamar, need to be judged for their appropriateness; judged and assessed to see if progress is, indeed, being made.....

The Legislative Council's Planning Committee and this special Panel on Tamar has heard many clearly argued (and backed by hard data) objections to the Administration's plans for the development of Tamar AND given clearly argued development alternatives. The Government has heard these objections and has modified some elements to the project – however, these modifications do not - at all - address the systemic problems of the re-development of Tamar.

Roads, heavy traffic, noise pollution and air pollution are the bane of all urban communities around the world. Traffic – and poor roads planning - has ruined many very liveable cities. Hong Kong should not be one of them.

Hong Kong is a small compact and easily manoeuvred place – private car ownership is still a rarity in Hong Kong precisely because our urban transport is efficient, reliable, convenient and – importantly - used by the majority of people who live here.

The Tamar development and the Central reclamation is an unnecessary development because we can control the flow of traffic in Central through other means - for example: and these are solutions that could be immediately implemented: road pricing such as in London or Singapore; rationalisation of buses and bus routes; setting of designated bus lanes; the immediate opening up of the woefully under-utilised Western Harbour Crossing. And then, longer term, the immediate start of construction of the new MTR northern line.

Tamar is an unnecessary development because the MAJORITY of Hong Kong's population will not benefit from the building of more roads. They will actually be TOTALLY unaffected by any traffic outcomes of the new roads being planned for Tamar and the Central reclamation because they ALREADY USE public transport (and, as stated earlier, improving bus efficiency could be better achieved through rationalisation of routes and designation of bus-only lanes). The plans for the Tamar re-development cannot claim that it will help a majority of the people – the roads planned for Tamar actually only assist a minority of the population that have private vehicles.

Page 2.

However, what Central does need is less traffic, less roads, more clean air, less noise pollution, less air pollution, more open space, and access to the waterfront AT GROUND and SEA LEVEL. These are the REAL problems that the Tamar re-development throws up and begs for answers.

Can the Administration and Government address these needs, please?

So, returning to the 'anti-development' taunt.....the Tamar re-development is simply not good, appropriate development that leads to progress, success and achievement'.

- John Batten