

LegCo Panel on Planning, Lands and Works, 28 June 2007

**HKCA Submission on
“Urban Design Study for the Central Waterfront (including the Tamar Site)”**

Introduction

Thank you for inviting the Hong Kong Construction Association (HKCA) to give views on this subject. The HKCA considers that the new Central Harbourfront, due to its prime and strategic location, is of paramount importance to the future development of not only the Central District, and can be developed as one of the identities of Hong Kong. To achieve this and in keeping Hong Kong's competitive edge with our neighbours, it is essential that sustainable infrastructures and facilities planning are brought about to fulfil the social, economical and environmental developments.

While the concerned Outline Zoning Plans were approved through a due statutory process several years ago, this study provides an opportunity to engage public discussions and inputs to refine the urban design framework to meet with the latest community aspirations. We commend the Administration in making such exercise to achieve a harmonious community.

Urban Design Objectives

We echo with the vision for a “world-class waterfront which is vibrant, attractive, accessible and symbolic of Hong Kong”. The infrastructure projects will have economical benefits while improving our transportation efficiency and the community will enjoy the additional recreational open space. To this end, we have the following views:

- Sustainable transport planning

We recall that the prime purpose of the Central Reclamation Phase III (CRIII) project is to provide land for essential transport infrastructure developments. As such, the proposed Central-Wanchai Bypass, road P2 and extended overrun tunnel of the Airport Railway should be given priority consideration in the planning exercise in providing maximum convenience to the commuters, having the least impact to the environment while be able to sustain the growth of our transportation need. Sufficient parking facilities, both for coaches and private cars, should be planned to cater for tourists and the general public. In order not to disrupt the overall design, the parking facilities could be underground structures to retain the aesthetic setting.

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- Mass transportation system

While we have a beautiful, vibrant and attractive waterfront, we want the public to use and enjoy it. Convenient and ease of access will encourage more people to visit the waterfront. Mass transportation has proven to be an effective and sustainable means of transportation of great efficiency and the proposed station of the Shatin-Central Link at the Civic Square outside Tamar will serve the purpose. Priority should be given to the early construction of the Shatin-Central Link, Airport Railway extension and West Island Line. Improved connectivity among various rails will further enhance the efficiency.

- Pedestrian accessibility

Comprehensive pedestrian linkages to facilitate the public going to the harbourfront on foot are to be provided so that the enhanced harbourfront will not be an isolated oasis. It has to be an integral part of the Central Business District but carries a different function for relaxing and enjoyment. The design is to be people oriented with the concept of bringing the public to the waterfront. With convenient accessibility and connections, more people will enjoy a refreshing walk after lunch while others can have a relaxing drink after work.

- Visual and physical impact

While about half of the area is zoned as Open Space with a proposed waterfront promenade running from Central to Wanchai, there is a Comprehensive Development Area at the northwest end. We wish to emphasize that the building heights must be strictly restricted in order to preserve the ridgeline and the harbourline, and the future developments must blend in with the surrounding community in a coherent manner. Comprehensive air ventilation assessments need to be conducted to ensure no adverse effect to the air quality even at street level. The buildings and podiums should not create canyon effects, limit pedestrian flow nor block views to the harbourfront.

Old Star Ferry Clock Tower and Queen's Pier

The HKCA supports the concept of reconstructing the old Star Ferry Clock Tower and reassembling the Queen's Pier. However we consider this should be done with the principle of having the least disturbance to other planned facilities/infrastructures and done in the most cost effective way.

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Among the alternatives, we concur with the functional approach by integrating the Queen's Pier with Piers 9 and 10 along the harbour. First of all, it will not encroach into the proposed road P2 and extended overrun tunnel of the Airport Railway that may cause delays to these developments. More importantly, Queen's Pier by the harbour is where it should belong and retains its identity as a "pier". A "dry" pier will only resemble another piece of shelter and people will not be able to relate its historical function of a pier. With creative design, the new piers could blend in with the reassembled Queen's Pier with added practical functions.

We agree the Star Ferry Clock Tower to be reconstructed as a focal point of the harbourfront with convenient connection from the city. The clock and chimes will have the practical function of telling time while reminding us of childhood memories. It would easily become yet another icon of "meeting place" in Central for our next generation.

Other Considerations

As the Tamar Development has reduced the building height and floor area, the proposed Exhibition Gallery was excised from the development. We take this opportunity and urge the Administration that the Exhibition Gallery to be built in the Government, Institution or Community zoned area. The Gallery is a proper venue to showcase our world-class infrastructure developments to tourists and as educational means for our youngsters to understand Hong Kong better. Sited at the new Central Harbourfront has the advantage of being in close proximity of the Civic Place and could be another attraction to tourists and locals while they enjoy the harbourfront along the promenade.

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