

Enclosure

**Legislative Council Panel on Development
Views from the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers on the
Proposed Redevelopment Scheme for the West Wing of
Central Government Offices**

General

In response to the invitation from the captioned Panel, the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers (HKIE) is pleased to provide views below on the Administration's Proposal on the redevelopment scheme for West Wing of Central Government Offices for consideration of the Panel.

Greenery

2. To cope with the global trend of environment protection and low carbon living environment, the Institution is in support of promoting a greener Central. It is pleased to note that more than two-third of the West Wing is intended to transform into public space and green areas. Furthermore, by means of introducing more open space and greenery area, the proposal aims to turn the site into an integral part of the extensive greenery network in Central.

3. The Institution supports the above objective as more open space and greenery area could foster better air ventilation and carbon reduction in the area where there are already a number of office buildings and busy roads in Central. Moreover, it could also help reducing the heat island effect in the region with the additional public space and greenery.

4. The Institution also considers the Proposal a good step forward and central to the sustainable development of Hong Kong. The Proposal indicates the Government's efforts to establish a balanced and sustainable environment for the Central area instead of capitalising the land value for revenue. The provision of additional public space and green features could further vitalise the environment and community.

5. To provide a clear picture for the public, we suggest the Government to consider indicating the figure of the existing green area. A direct comparison could then be easily made to show the public the additional greenery area which has been provided in the Proposal for the public's easy reference.

Compatible Building Design

6. Apart from more open space and green areas, promoting design and construction of Green Buildings are also crucial towards a harmonic and sustainable environment. The Proposal delineated that the height and the bulk of the building will be compatible with the surrounding developments, and the new commercial building will also be setback to facilitate widening of the Ice House Street and provide more pedestrian circulation space.

7. The Institution applauds with the above suggestions. In addition, we consider that the building should have better air ventilation, green features and energy performance. In response to the climate change and building sustainability, the HKIE always supports the promotion of Green Buildings. While we encourage higher energy efficiency, better green designs and features in buildings are also important. The HKIE advocates the importance of the adoption of greening schemes and policies, within which vertical greening shall be adopted as much as possible in this new building.

8. On the other hand, with an aim to encourage and implement the greening benefits, we opine that the Government should consider putting down requirements on this development to undergo a “Green Building Labeling” assessment or similar methodology in order to ensure and promote the green standards and environmental friendliness of the development. By this means, the new building could be accompanied by effective and measurable green features which would enhance the indoor quality and create a healthy and low-carbon environment for Central.

Better Connectivity

9. The proposal also targets to improve the connectivity of the site by means of new pedestrian connection, additional landscaped footbridge, and widening of Lower Albert Road. We share that more open space, new pedestrian facilities, and road widening would definitely enhance the accessibility of the site from all directions.

10. We are pleased to see a better connectivity and easy access around the area. Given the good accessibility of the site, we suggest the Government to explore the possibility of using the underground space of the site as a transportation hub or transport facility, such as MTR station, bus terminus, etc.

11. We always hold the notion that limiting the provisions of facilities like the numbers of carpark and constricting drop-offs for vehicular access will limit vehicles making access is not valid. The assumption is now proven wrong and the situation is worsen by keeping the same width of a street whilst allowing abetting buildings of a higher GFA.

12. To this end, we always propose for every new addition, the provisions of vehicle access should not only serve that particular addition but more with extra to ease the surrounding areas.

13. We are pleased to note the widening of Lower Albert Road to ease the traffic flow problems with the Central District but considered it may not be sufficient enough to cover traffic flows in the vicinity or those flows along Queen’s Road Central and Ice House Street.

14. A major traffic impact assessment may be required to re-configure Lower Albert Road, Ice House Street and Queen's Road Central.

15. Perhaps it is a good opportunity to consider an off-road passenger drop off/pick up facility with covered walk-ways linking up with the existing network so as to ease the overall traffic situation bringing a direct benefit to improve traffic flow along Queen’s Road and emergency vehicular response times.

16. At least we should aim to give a fair chance for cars to move aside for ambulances to pass.

Test

17. In assessing the above, we had looked into three scenarios.

18. The first is to maintain the site as it is to meet the yearning call to preserve the whole area as a historical site. To this end, we conclude it is not conducive to have the three buildings to remain isolated as without needed improvements in means for access, it is actually discouraging for passing pedestrians.

19. The second is to have all three buildings demolished and to build or not to build. We conclude this is never a starter.

20. The third scenario as suggested converting the building of the least historical value to pave rooms for needed improvements to the surroundings must hence be the only sustainable option.

Conclusion

21. The Central Government Offices (CGO) Complex is situated in prominent location of Central. As all existing offices in the Complex will be relocated to the new Central Government Complex at Tamar in 2011, it provides a good opportunity for the Government to explore the potential use of the existing CGO area.

22. In the Proposal, we are pleased to see that the Government reconsider the future use of the CGO site in regard to public concerns and global trends. As delineated in the Proposal, the future use of the CGO area will focus to provide more greenery, better pedestrian connectivity, preserve the heritage precinct, and compatible building design with the surrounding areas.

23. The Institution considers that the Proposal covers the topics and public concerns on air quality, environmental protection, sustainable development, and heritage preservation etc. We concur with the recommendations as set in the Proposal as we believe they are in right directions. However, we would suggest the Government to collect more views from the public before making final decision on the land use. There may be voices and arguments of why not putting the precious CBD land to the best economical use for business development, and capitalize the land value for a better use of public resources (the land premium) in order to support other services or social needs.

24. It could also be one of the options that the CGO building is to remain intact. It is always impossible to make a perfect decision as different stakeholders have their own concerns and interests. Therefore, we would advise the Government to carry out thorough consultations on this subject in order to arrive at a more balanced and publicly acceptable scheme.