

27 April 2019

Legislative Council Panel on Transport,  
Hillside Escalator Links & Elevator Systems Committee

Re: Braemar Hill Pedestrian Link

I, Tam Pui Tak, is the serving Secretary of the Incorporated Owners of Fortress Garden and a member of the Fortress Garden Concern Group and I have the following comments on the captioned subject in respect of the Fortress Hill District (FHD):-

Background history

(1) Erroneous choice of location

As the name implies, the project is designed for the residents of Braemar Hill. Due to lack of prior consultation with local residents and stake holders and inexperience of Highways Department (HyD) staff as well as members of the Planning, Works and Housing Committee (the Committee) of the Eastern District Council (EDC), the authority in 2014 mistakenly chose the wrong alignment scheme with FHD as the starting point of the project. With this fatal mistake, this project is doomed at the very onset. Instead of being beneficiaries, FH residents turn out to be victims absorbing most of the casualties.

(2) Inadequate early consultations

As HyD did not commence consultations with the local residents and the stake holders and reveal the project until Oct 2016 when the Committee of EDC has already sanctioned the preliminary design in Sep 2016, there is a natural lack of confidence and support from the local residents for this problematic project.

(3) Defective procedural justice in approving the project in 19 June 2018 by the Committee of EDC

During that meeting, only some proposals concerning the 2 lifts from King's Road to FHD were discussed and put to voting while other components of the project were ignored and never put to voting. Despite that, the Committee still declared that the project was approved. According to procedure, voting and approval of a specific item cannot construe as voting and approving of all other items of the project.

Under such circumstances, there is legitimate ground to challenge the legality of the resolutions of that meeting. Despite repeated written requests from the residents, the Chairmans of the Committee and EDC persistently refused to provide a proper clarification on this issue.

In response to HyD's proposals in the Fortress Hill District, the Fortress Garden (FG) residents have the following comments:-

(1) The construction of 2 new lifts with ancillary facilities connecting FHD and the lobby of the Fortress Hill MTR station

There are already 2 existing lifts outside FH MTR station connecting King's Road to FHD. The FH MTR station also provides suitable facility to convey wheelchair users to the station platforms. The proposed provision of another 2 lifts is indeed a luxury and squander of public fund. The opening of 4 lifts within 50 metres of each other would further aggravate the already chaotic congestion condition in King's Road outside exit A of the FH MTR station.

According to HyD, this is only an "UPHILL escalator links and elevator system project" and neither a "barrier-free access" nor "two-way traffic system". According to Design Manual - Barrier Free Access 2008/ Code of Practice and Design Manuals by Buildings Department, no ramp should be steeper than 1 in 12 gradient to prevent the wheelchair users from tipping.

Information provided by an engineer points out that the gradient of the private road from Fortress Metro Tower to FH is 1 in 10; FH Road is 1 in 8; and Cloud View Road is 1 in 10. All of them exceed the maximum standard of 1 in 12 and are therefore sub-standard.

Thus, the concept is nothing more than a slogan and inapplicable in this project because the uphill gradient of the treacherous terrain of the districts is unsuitable for wheelchair users. Hence, the “barrier-free concept” cannot be used as a pretext to design this uphill project.

The construction of the 2 new lifts requires the excavation of part of the slope (on which the foundation of the Fortress Garden estate rests) and eradication of a large number of trees and plants on the slope which will lead to eventual soil erosion, slope slide/failure during inclement weather. The foundation of the FG estate will deteriorate in the long run. Who will compensate the repair and maintenance expenses of the estate in future? This is a blatant disregard of the safety of residents and their properties.

During the late consultation process, HyD revealed that they have never conducted any technical slope stability analysis/survey before all these elaborated schematic planning of the project. Residents do not have any guarantee that the slope will still be safe after the construction work.

The FHD residents strongly request HyD to abandon the construction of these 2 lifts and ancillary facilities.

(2) The construction of 2 new lifts and connecting elevated walking bridges near the bus stop at Fortress Hill Road for access to Tin Hau Temple Road

At present, the access from the bus stop (opposite to Fu Kar Court) at Fortress Hill Road to Tin Hau Temple Road is either by footpath or staircase within 5 minutes' walk. We can never appreciate the wisdom of having to construct 2 new lifts for such purpose.

The 2 new lifts with a height of 62 metres is equivalent to 6th floor of the nearby Fu Kar Court. It is a serious invasion of the privacy of the residents, obstructs views and natural lighting and causes long lasting noise and light pollution from the operating machines.

To make way for such provisions, the existing bus stop opposite to Fu Kar Court at Fortress Hill Road will be resited 35 metres downhill while the road-crossing facility be moved up near the entrance of the access road to Fortress Metro Tower. The declaration that the repositioning of the facilities is to promote the wellbeing of residents is a blatant lie because bus commuters have to walk 35 metres more uphill to go home each time they take the bus. The repositioning of the road crossing facility will create a blind spot for drivers of Fortress Metro Tower driving out to Fortress Hill Road and poses danger for pedestrians crossing the road.

(3) The construction of elevated walking bridge across Tin Hau Temple Road for access to Cloud View Road

Road crossing facility at Tin Hau Temple Road outside Hacienda already exists and has always served the purpose during the past. The pedestrian flow rate in that locality is not categorised as high. The proposal does not warrant a high priority rating.

The FH residents also request HyD to abandon the construction of the 2 lifts at Fortress Hill Road and the connecting elevated walking bridge across Tin Hau Temple Road and abolish the resiting of the bus stop and road crossing facility at Fortress Hill Road.

In conclusion, we opine that the proposed infrastructures in the FHD are neither cost-effective nor beneficial to the local residents. Why should a small community like FHD be endowed with the luxury of having 6 lifts for traffic? The proposed “white elephant” project will cost several hundred millions in construction as well as recurrent maintenance. They are indeed a huge squander of valuable public fund. Above all,

the safety of human lives and properties are at stake and it also affects the peace and wellbeing of the community and sabotages the environment.

Lastly, we earnestly hope that the authority and the gate-keepers in LegCo would seriously scrutinise this lavish project. Surely, no sensible and responsible LegCo member would like to be a sponsor of this ABSURDITY!

TAM PUI TAK

Secretary of the Incorporated Owners of Fortress Garden

Member of the Fortress Garden Concern Group