

Paper for the Yau Tsim Mong District Council

Briefing on the work of the Housing, Planning and Lands Bureau (Planning and Lands Branch) and Public Consultations underway

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to brief members on the work of the Planning and Lands Branch (PLB) of the Housing, Planning and Lands Bureau and to seek members views on two public consultation exercises recently launched by PLB, namely on "Hong Kong 2030 planning vision and strategy Stage 3" and "Building Management and Maintenance".

An Overview of Work of PLB

2. The Housing, Planning and Lands Bureau (the Bureau) led by the Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands comprises the PLB and the Housing Department (the latter was formed by the merging of the former Housing Branch and the former Housing Department). Each is headed by a respective Permanent Secretary, namely the Permanent Secretary (Planning and Lands) and the Permanent Secretary (Housing) who is also the Director of Housing.
3. The PLB is responsible for the formulation of policies on land use planning, land management, buildings and urban renewal. It oversees the implementation of such policies largely by four government departments, viz. Planning Department, Territory Development Department, Lands Department and Buildings Department, the Land Registry Trading Fund and a statutory body, the Urban Renewal Authority (URA).
4. The PLB and the relevant departments contributing to its policy areas together have an operating budget of \$3,295 million in 2003-04, representing 1.5% of total government recurrent expenditure. To help restore fiscal balance, the PLB group of departments is undergoing efficiency drive to achieve savings.

Legislative Programme

5. The PLB group of departments discharges a range of statutory responsibilities. In the current legislative session, the following Bills are being processed –

- a) Town Planning (Amendment) Bill – to streamline the town planning process under the Town Planning Ordinance and to enhance openness of and public participation in the planning system,
- b) Buildings (Amendment) Bill – to improve the statutory framework for building control and building safety, including the introduction of a new category of “minor works” to enable qualified persons to undertake specified minor works e.g. those relating to signboards and removal of unauthorized building works; and
- c) Land Titles Bill – to introduce a title registration system to give greater security to interests in land and property and to simplify conveyancing.

Interactions with District Councils

6. In their day-to-day operation, the PLB group of departments as well as the URA have considerable interactions with District Councils (DCs). Individual DC members also refer cases of concern or complaints to the departments for investigation. Such interactions are extremely useful for us to gauge the local reaction and acceptability of departmental proposals and to provide more timely intervention. Some of the more common areas of consultations with DCs include –

- Planning Department consults DCs in the process of conducting various planning studies, in the preparation/revision of statutory and departmental town plans and on major development proposals
- District Lands Offices (DLOs) of Lands Department provide land input on minor works carried out by DCs (e.g. rain shelters and sitting out areas) as and when required and consults members on land resumptions relating to government or URA projects. Periodically or upon request, DLOs provide DCs or their committees with land administration information such as short

term land use arrangements, statistics on illegal occupation of Government land, progress reports on small house applications etc.

- TDD consults DCs at various stages of a development project, from project initiation through planning to project implementation.
- BD consults DCs on issues of building safety and addresses members' concern about unauthorized building works in districts.
- The URA consults DCs on the implementation of individual urban renewal projects.

Policy Initiatives in the 2004 Policy Agenda

7. The 2004 Policy Agenda issued on 7 January 2004 lists the Government's new and ongoing initiatives over the next three and a half years. Those more significant ones relating to PLB are highlighted below --

New initiatives

- a) Continuing to co-ordinate the timetable for the disposal of railway-property developments to ensure that there would not be adverse impact on the property market ;
- b) Implementing the improvement measures for the Pre-Sale Consent Scheme ;
- c) Considering how best to speed up the processing of application for small houses ;
- d) Ensuring that our planning and land use objectives are geared towards our mission to protect the Victoria Harbour and enhance it for the enjoyment of our residents and visitors alike. Apart from Central, Wan Chai North and South East Kowloon, the Government will not undertake any further reclamation in the Harbour. Our policy will be reflected in relevant town plans.
- e) Studying various options and promoting discussion on how to speed up the urban renewal process.

Ongoing initiatives

- f) Formulating a comprehensive development package for the integrated arts, cultural and entertainment district in West Kowloon ;
- g) Developing a land use, transport and environment strategy under the Hong Kong 2030 study to guide the long-term development of Hong Kong ;
- h) Enhancing building management and maintenance of private housing through education, publicity, and greater participation of professional bodies and the private sector, and initiating discussions on ways to provide one stop service to owners of private buildings ;
- i) Improving the legislative framework for building control and building safety ;
- j) Streamlining the town planning process under the Town Planning Ordinance and enhancing openness of the planning system ;
- k) Consulting various stakeholders with a view to making preliminary proposals on small house policy for more in depth discussion.

8. In connection with paragraphs 7(g) and (h), we are conducting two public consultation exercises the aims and contents of which are outlined below.

Hong Kong 2030 planning vision and strategy – Stage 3 public consultation

9. We wish to develop a land use, transport and environment strategy under the Hong Kong 2030 Study to guide the long-term development of Hong Kong. In this public consultation, we seek the views of the public on a number of planning options and alternatives. For example, what kind of living environment do we prefer? A high-density or a lower-density living environment? Should our future homes be built in the existing urban area or in the New Territories? Should we keep on expanding the existing business districts, or should we identify alternative locations for constructing new and quality business centres?

10. Based on public views expressed in the first two stages of consultation, the Stage 3 consultation has adopted as one of its broad directions for development the provision of a quality living environment through better design of our harbourfront and public space and better protection of the natural and cultural heritage. In connection with this, the Government has reiterated its commitment to preserve and protect the Victoria Harbour. Specifically, the Government will not undertake any further reclamation in the Harbour apart from the works in Central, Wan Chai North and South East Kowloon to meet essential needs. In light of public concern about harbour reclamations, we have published a further booklet entitled *All About Central Reclamation Phase III*. This aims to explain the justifications for this transport-led reclamation, that the proposed reclamation is a minimum reclamation option which has gone through a due and diligent process of scrutiny and that we intend to develop a vibrant promenade on the land formed.

11. For details, please refer to the attached consultation document and information leaflet on the Hong Kong 2030 planning vision and strategy and the booklet on the Central Reclamation Phase III. The Stage Three public consultation of the study is now in progress and will last *until 31 March 2004*.

Building Management and Maintenance

12. Since the outbreak of SARS last year, there is increased awareness of the importance of building care. The incident also highlights the need to establish a holistic and long-term solution to building management and maintenance matters so as to tackle the problems associated with buildings neglect. In this connection, we launched a public consultation exercise on 29 December 2003.

13. The consultation document and leaflet attached set out details of the basic principle, policy direction and support measures in fostering a building care culture and creating a better living environment. In particular, we invite views on the follows:

- Owners must accept responsibility for keeping their buildings in good repair, including the necessary financial commitment.

- Building management and maintenance should be integrated to provide a sustainable solution to the building neglect problem.
- The relevant industries should come up with user-friendly and cost-effective management and maintenance services with a view to assisting owners in discharging their responsibilities. The Government, in addition to enforcing the law, should be a supporter and facilitator of the above efforts working in conjunction with the relevant non-government bodies.

14. We intend to enhance building management and maintenance of private housing through education, publicity, and greater participation of professional bodies and the private sector, and initiate discussions on ways to provide one stop service to owners of private buildings. We will collate the views of all parties concerned including the LegCo, District Councils, the industry, professional bodies, non-government bodies and the general public. Given that the issue concerns each of us in view of its impact on our living environment, we will carefully consider the views received before deciding on the next stage of work. The consultation exercise will last *until 15 April 2004*.

Views sought

15. Members' views are sought on the two consultation documents "Hong Kong 2030 study" and "Building Management and Maintenance". Members are also welcome to provide comments on the work relating to PLB and its group of departments. We look forward to working closely with the DCs to achieve our mission in building a quality living environment.

Housing, Planning and Lands Bureau
(Planning and Lands Branch)

January 2004

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