

LCQ20: Development of the lands currently or formerly in the Frontier Closed Area

Following is a question by the Hon Tony Tse and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (February 3):

Question:

The Government substantially reduced the land coverage of the Frontier Closed Area (FCA) from about 2 800 hectares to about 400 hectares during the period from 2012 to 2016. However, as the Government has not made detailed planning over the years for optimising the use of the lands released from the FCA (the released lands), quite a number of lands with development potential have been left idle for years or put to temporary uses only, such as warehouses, car parks and recycling yards. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the following information of (a) the lands in the FCA and (b) the released lands at present: (i) locations, (ii) areas, (iii) whether they are government lands or private lands, (iv) permitted uses, and (v) existing uses (set out in a table);
- (2) whether it will expeditiously carry out detailed planning for the released lands, so as to fully realise their development potential, alleviate the land shortage problem, and tie in with the rapid development of the Mainland cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (Greater Bay Area); if so, of the timetable; if not, the reasons for that;
- (3) whether it will expeditiously study the further reduction in the coverage of the FCA for closer integration between Hong Kong and the Mainland; if so, of the timetable; if not, the reasons for that; and
- (4) whether it will hold discussions with the Mainland authorities regarding the work mentioned in (2) and (3), so as to better grasp the opportunities brought by the rapid development of the Mainland cities in the Greater Bay Area?

Reply:

President,

In the course of planning for the land in border area, including the land released from the original Frontier Closed Area (FCA), full consideration will be given to how the geographical advantages of the area can be leveraged in order to seize the economic opportunities brought about by regional development such as the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-

Macao Greater Bay Area. The proposal in the Hong Kong 2030+: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030 of developing a Northern Economic Belt in the border area for research and development, modern logistics, warehousing and other emerging industries aims exactly at capturing the enormous opportunities arising from the regional development. The Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park in the Lok Ma Chau Loop, as well as the proposed strategic growth area in the New Territories North (NTN) also fall within this economic belt. The development land in these two development areas covers about 190 hectares of the original FCA. The details of the developments will be set out in the following sections.

Having consulted the relevant policy bureaux and department, my reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) & (3) The establishment of the FCA is to provide a buffer zone for law enforcement agencies to maintain the integrity of the boundary between the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) and the Mainland and to combat illegal immigration, smuggling and other cross-boundary criminal activities. It has all along been the policy of the HKSAR Government to limit the coverage of the FCA to the area necessary for ensuring public order. Therefore, having balanced the security risks concerned, the HKSAR Government had already substantially reduced the land coverage of the FCA from about 2 800 hectares to about 400 hectares between 2008 and 2016. Please refer to the plan attached for the relevant locations.

Currently, the FCA covers only the Police's boundary patrol roads and the land to its north, boundary-crossing facilities, Sha Tau Kok Town, Starling Inlet, and parts of Mai Po. The primary considerations for retaining the above locations within the FCA are the actual environment of the area and the associated security risks. While the HKSAR Government will review the situation from time to time, it considers the current coverage of the FCA appropriate.

At present, private land accounts for about less than 10 per cent of the area of the FCA. Of the released area of the FCA, about less than 30 per cent is private land.

For the major zoning on statutory plans and current major uses of the FCA and the released FCA, please refer to the Annex.

(2) Studies have been conducted on the development of the released land of the FCA. The major studies include the Planning and Engineering Study on Development of Lok Ma Chau Loop (the P&E Study) completed in 2014 and the Preliminary Feasibility Study on Developing the New Territories North (NTN Study) completed in 2018. We are working proactively to take forward the relevant development proposals.

The P&E Study has taken into account the public views collected through public engagements and the prevailing planning circumstances, and put forward the development plan for the Lok Ma Chau Loop. The Lok Ma Chau Loop, which covers about 87 hectares of land, will be developed into the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park (HSITP). Upon its full development,

the HSITP will provide a maximum gross floor area of 1.2 million square metres (approximately three times that of the current Hong Kong Science Park) and become Hong Kong's largest-ever innovation and technology platform.

To dovetail with and support the phased implementation of the HSITP, the Finance Committee (FC) of the Legislative Council has already approved funding for the site formation and infrastructure works under Main Works Package 1 and the construction of a fire station and ambulance depot with departmental accommodations, and will process the funding application related to the first batch of development of the HSITP soon. Subject to funding approval by the FC, the first batch of buildings in the HSITP is expected to be completed in 2024.

Under the NTN Study, a preliminary feasibility study on the development potential of New Territories North, which included the released land of the FCA, has been conducted. The study has also proposed a New Territories North strategic growth area for meeting long-term land demand. Three potential development areas (PDAs) in proximity of boundary control points, i.e. San Tin/Lok Ma Chau Development Node, Man Kam To Logistics Corridor and New Territories North New Town (covering Heung Yuen Wai, Ping Che, Ta Kwu Ling, Hung Lung Hang and Queen's Hill), have been identified within the New Territories North strategic growth area with a view to capitalising on the strength of these areas of easy access to and from Shenzhen and Eastern Guangdong.

A feasibility study on San Tin/Lok Ma Chau Development Node was already commenced in September 2019. We will work towards conducting the detailed design for this development node as well as the planning and engineering studies for the remaining two PDAs within this year.

In addition, the Chief Executive's 2020 Policy Address states that the Government will explore with the Shenzhen Municipal Government the implementation of the "co-location" arrangements at the new Huanggang Port in Shenzhen. Subject to the progress and result of the discussion, we will study how the over 20 hectares of land that could be released from the Hong Kong's Lok Ma Chau Control Point, which is now part of the FCA, could be deployed for other uses.

In the course of examining the land developments mentioned above, we will fully consider and capitalise on the advantages of the frontier locations, and take into account the latest regional development as well as Hong Kong's development needs in formulating the appropriate land uses. On the other hand, a considerable portion of the remaining land released from the FCA comprises woodland, hilly terrain and fishponds, etc., which has limited development potential.

(4) As for the development of the HSITP, discussions and consultations on major issues regarding the development of the Loop have all along been made between Hong Kong and Shenzhen through the Joint Task Force on the Development of the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park in the Loop. Moreover, the Planning Department of Hong Kong and the Planning and Natural Resources Bureau of Shenzhen Municipality meet regularly on a yearly

basis to exchange views on each other's planning work.