

LCQ22: Developing public housing on brownfield sites

Following is a question by the Hon Alice Mak and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (April 21):

Question:

In its Study on Existing Profile and Operations of Brownfield Sites in the New Territories published in November 2019, the Planning Department (PlanD) indicated that 450 hectares (ha) of scattered brownfield sites might have relatively higher possible development potential in view of their proximity to existing new towns and major highways as well as their relatively large size. The PlanD completed early last year the review of about 160 hectares (ha) of such brownfield sites which were closer to the existing infrastructure, and shortlisted eight brownfield clusters suitable for public housing development. Relevant engineering feasibility studies have commenced. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the following details of the various brownfield clusters:

- (i) the areas and distribution of the various sites, broken down by the uses thereof,
- (ii) the number of lots occupied by existing operators, and their lot numbers and site areas, and
- (iii) the current numbers of residential units and residents;

(2) of the following details expected of the various brownfield clusters upon completion of public housing development:

- (i) the areas and distribution of the various sites, broken down by the uses thereof (including housing, community facilities and roads),
- (ii) the number of residential units and the plot ratios of the sites concerned, and
- (iii) the carrying capacity of nearby transport systems, including the traffic capacities of trunk roads and public transport interchanges; and

(3) whether it has drawn up a timetable for carrying out the following work for the various brownfield clusters:

- (i) the various processes involved in turning "non-spade-ready" sites into "spade-ready" sites (including engineering feasibility studies, detailed design, rezoning, land resumption, clearance, land decontamination and site formation works, and handover of the sites to the Housing Department), and
- (ii) expounding the compensation and rehousing arrangements to the affected residents and operators?

Reply:

President,

The reply to the various parts of Hon Alice Mak's question is as follows:

(1) Of the 450 hectares (ha) of brownfield sites with no development plans but may have higher possible development potential, the Planning Department (PlanD) completed the first-phase review of 160 ha of brownfield sites closer to the existing infrastructure in 2019 (Note 1), and promulgated eight shortlisted clusters in Yuen Long, Tuen Mun and Tai Po suitable for higher density public housing development in the short to medium term (details are set out in LC Paper No. CB(1)463/19-20(01) (Note 2)). The locations and study areas of these brownfield clusters are at Annex. The PlanD has uploaded the study area and site plan of each cluster onto its website (Note 3).

According to the findings of the "Study on Existing Profile and Operations of Brownfield Sites in the New Territories", it is estimated that these eight clusters covering 36 ha of brownfield sites may involve approximately 230 operations, which mainly include general warehouse and storage, as well as facilities related to the logistics and construction industries. In addition, should the public housing development projects be implemented, removal of structures scattering across the shortlisted brownfield clusters (possibly including a small number of temporary domestic structures) may be unavoidable for optimising land development.

Upon completion of the engineering feasibility study (EFS) for each shortlisted brownfield cluster and confirmation of the feasibility of the proposed public housing development projects and the development parameters, the Government would initiate the procedures for rezoning, detailed design and land resumption accordingly. Detailed information about the lots being occupied by the operators, and the numbers of households and residents involved would be available after the completion of freezing surveys by the Lands Department.

(2) The Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) has progressively commenced EFSs for these eight brownfield clusters from June 2020 onwards. The EFSs will explore the feasibility and development parameters of public housing developments, review and recommend the required upgrading of infrastructural facilities such as transport, drainage, sewerage, water supply, etc. The EFSs are expected to be completed successively in around 2022. The CEDD will, having regard to the needs of the planned population, recommend the provision for Government, institution or community facilities, open space and commercial facilities in consultation with relevant departments and with reference to the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines. Any possible impacts arising from the proposed public housing developments on the adjacent roads and the improvement measures so required would be established upon the completion of the traffic and transport impact assessments for each brownfield cluster.

Subject to the findings of the EFSs, it is roughly estimated at this stage that the eight brownfield clusters may produce over 20 000 public housing units. This estimation is based on the maximum domestic plot ratio of 3.6 for rural areas as set out in the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines. In view of the shortage of public housing supply, we are further

exploring under the EFSs the feasibility to raise the domestic plot ratio with a view to increasing the supply of housing units by taking into full consideration various development constraints (such as the capacity of transport infrastructure). The actual development parameters are subject to the findings of the EFSs.

(3) For these eight brownfield clusters, at this stage, we expect to transform them into "spade-ready sites" through completing EFSs, detailed design, rezoning, land resumption, clearance, land decontamination and site formation works, and hand over the sites to the relevant authority for construction of public housing in about six years to increase the supply in the short to medium term.

Relevant compensation and rehousing arrangements for affected households and brownfield operators will be provided in accordance with the enhanced ex-gratia measures announced in May 2018. Our plan is to explain the compensation and rehousing arrangements to all relevant parties after the freezing surveys.

Note 1: The second-phase review of the remaining 290 ha of brownfield sites was also completed. Details are set out in LC Paper No. CB(1)756/20-21(01) (www.legco.gov.hk/yr20-21/english/panels/dev/papers/devcb1-756-1-e.pdf).

Note 2: The hyperlink is as follows:

www.legco.gov.hk/yr19-20/english/panels/dev/papers/devcb1-463-1-e.pdf.

Note 3: The hyperlink is as follows:

www.pland.gov.hk/pland_en/p_study/comp_s/Brownfield/Report/Shortlisted%20Brownfield%20Clusters_2020.pdf.