

LCQ3: Land use planning

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

Question:

At present, the implementation programmes for public facilities depend on the priority of individual projects in the Government's public works programme. The relevant factors for consideration include the population of the districts concerned, provision of and demand for existing facilities, as well as the policies of and allocation of resources to individual bureau and government department, etc. Owing to the aforesaid circumstances, the provision of public facilities in new development areas often lags behind population growth. As a result, those residents who are the first to move into these areas become "trailblazers". In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will change the current situation where it can only catch up after falling behind in the provision of public facilities, and construct public facilities as early as possible when taking forward the development of new development areas; if not, what difficulties and obstacles are involved;

(2) whether it will adopt a "public facility first" approach in the development of the Lok Ma Chau Loop; how it ensures that the development of the Loop and that of the surrounding sites will complement each other and produce a synergy effect; and

(3) whether it has explored ways to improve the consultation efforts relating to land use planning, such as strengthening consultation with owners of the surrounding lands, and including persons waiting to move into the residential buildings under construction nearby and students of the schools nearby as consultation targets with a view to earning the support of stakeholders for land use planning, thereby shortening the time taken from planning to completion of public facilities?

Reply:

President,

After consulting the relevant bureaux, my reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Jeffrey Lam is as follows:

(1) In planning for a New Development Area (NDA), the fundamental concept is to build a balanced community with all the necessary facilities as far as possible, and this includes the provision of various infrastructure and community facilities to meet the needs of population growth. In this light, in the early stage of planning public facilities for a community, we will reserve sufficient land for developing such facilities with reference to the

Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines and on the basis of the population size and structure projections. In parallel, close contact will be maintained with departments responsible for individual public facilities in the course of implementation of the infrastructure projects concerned in phases, so as to ensure the relevant preparation work is taken forward and the necessary funding approval is sought in a timely manner.

To develop an NDA or a new town, it usually takes 10 to 20 years from planning and building to full completion. Although the relevant bureaux and departments are committed to implementing the projects on schedule, their actual progress may be subject to a variety of factors such as the complexity of individual projects, resource allocation, and changes in service requirements. While we will adhere to the mechanism mentioned above, attempts will also be made where practicable to expedite the implementation of community facilities projects with different approaches with a view to the early completion of the community facilities in the NDA.

In the course of project delivery, we will make use of different mechanisms with flexibility. For instance, in the planning of the Kai Tak Development Area, a Metro Park will be built to the north of the former runway, while the central part will mainly be zoned for residential use, and the waterfront area on both sides of the former runway will be zoned Open Space for development of a waterfront promenade for shared use by pedestrians and cyclists. Taking into consideration the public expectation of being able to enjoy the waterfront area as soon as possible, part of the waterfront promenade on the former runway will be developed in the form of private open space development, with its design and construction undertaken by the developer of the former runway site. Upon completion, the promenade will be handed over to the Government for management and open for public use. On another front, the Civil Engineering and Development Department has incorporated the works of a site of public open space into the contract for the road works in the vicinity. This arrangement has advanced the completion of the waterfront promenade by a few years.

Also, the Chief Executive announced in the 2020 Policy Address that about 5 per cent of the gross floor area in suitable future projects of the Hong Kong Housing Authority and the Hong Kong Housing Society should be set aside, as far as practicable, for welfare purposes. Under this initiative, upon completion of a public housing project, the construction of the related welfare premises will also be completed. Besides, where appropriate, private developers will be required under the Land Sale Programme to assist in constructing public facilities, such as welfare facilities and public transport interchanges, so that such facilities can commence operation early, tying in with the population intake as far as practicable.

(2) The Government is pressing ahead with the development of the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park (HSITP) at the Lok Ma Chau Loop (the Loop). The HSITP will be developed in two phases. The first phase involves the development of the western part of the Loop. The Government will provide the supporting infrastructure and public facilities for the HSITP as early as possible, not only to support the first phase development of the HSITP, but

also to cater for the needs of the second phase development at a later stage. The site formation and infrastructure works currently in progress include land decontamination and site formation for the entire Loop, the construction of a western connection road to connect Fanling/San Tin Highway, a direct road link to connect to the MTR Lok Ma Chau Station, a public transport interchange within the western part of the Loop, most of the roads and cycle tracks within the Loop, 7 hectares (ha) of recreational facilities, about 13 ha of ecological area, as well as a fresh water service reservoir and water supply system, sewage treatment works and a sewerage system, which will be sufficient to support the development of the entire HSITP. The sewage treatment works covered by the Government's public works programme are expected to complete in the second half of 2026. To tie in with the gradual completion of the first batch of buildings of the HSITP in end-2024, the first batch of the HSITP development also includes temporary sewage treatment works. In addition, the western electricity substation and a fire station and ambulance depot are scheduled to be completed at the same time when the first batch of buildings in the HSITP are completed.

The development near the Loop is mainly the San Tin/Lok Ma Chau Development Node, which is currently under study. In addition, if co-location arrangements are to be implemented at the new Huanggang Port in Shenzhen, over 20 ha of land near the Loop in the Lok Ma Chau Control Point of Hong Kong can be released for other uses. In planning the future development of this land area, we will carefully consider how to tie in the development with the HSITP in the Loop to achieve synergy.

(3) There are established statutory consultation procedures and time frames regarding the making of statutory town plans. Under the Town Planning Ordinance, in the process of plan-making, the Town Planning Board (TPB) will exhibit the relevant plans or amendments for two months for public representations. After the expiry of the exhibition period, the representations received will be published for public comments. If the TPB decides to amend the plans having regard to the representations, the amendment will be published for three weeks for further public representations. The TPB will conduct hearings of the related issues and then make decisions. The TPB is required to submit the plans and relevant amendments, together with the representations, comments and further representations, to the Chief Executive in Council for approval within nine months after the expiry of the plan exhibition period.

Apart from the above statutory requirements, we will also commence public consultation at the beginning stage of a planning study in order to incorporate public comments into our planning proposals as early as possible. The relevant channels of consultation include public forums, community workshops, focus group discussions and written submissions, and the participants include villagers and farmers of the areas concerned, brownfield operators, landowners, nearby residents, professional organisations, green groups, the development sector and members of the public. We consider that this mode of consultation, which is a combination of statutory and administrative measures, is an appropriate method as it can enhance public engagement on the one hand, and uphold development efficiency on the other.

Thank you, President.