

LCQ4: Concrete batching plant in Yau Tong

Following is a question by the Hon Wilson Or and a reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (June 10):

Question:

In 1998, the Government changed the planned uses of the sites in the Yau Tong Industrial Area (YTIA) from Industrial to Comprehensive Development Area, Residential and Commercial zones. With the completion of and intake of residents for a number of residential projects in that area in recent years, its population has been increasing incessantly. Some residents have relayed that currently a concrete batching plant is still in operation in the area, causing environmental pollution and affecting the daily living and health of the residents in the vicinity. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it has assessed the impacts caused by the aforesaid concrete batching plant to the environment and the residents in the vicinity; of the number of complaints received by the Government in the past three years about the air, noise or other environmental pollution caused by the concrete batching plant;
- (2) whether the Government had forecast the timing for the concrete batching plant to move out of the area when it changed the planned uses of the sites in YTIA; whether the Government has in recent years discussed with the person-in-charge of the plant the plan and timetable for relocating the plant; and
- (3) of the measures in place to resolve the conflicts between the operation of the concrete batching plant and the development projects implemented according to the new planned uses?

Reply:

President,

Concrete is extensively used in building and infrastructure construction in Hong Kong and reliable concrete supply is very important. As fresh concrete will harden with time, the locations of concrete batching plants (CBPs) entail a geographical consideration so that concrete could be delivered timely to construction sites in various regions. Excessive transportation distance may affect the quality of concrete. There are currently three CBPs in the Yau Tong Industrial Area (YTIA) with Specified Process Licences (SPLs) issued by the Environmental Protection Department (EPD), accounting for about 30 per cent of the total concrete supply in Hong

Kong. These CBPs supply concrete for building and infrastructure projects in East Kowloon, Tseung Kwan O, etc. including the Kai Tai Sports Park under construction.

After consultation with the Environmental Bureau, I provide responses to the various parts of the question as follows:

(1) There are currently three CBPs in the YTIA, which are subject to statutory control in the environmental, public hygiene and road traffic aspects. According to the Air Pollution Control Ordinance, when these three CBPs applied for SPLs, they had submitted an air pollution control plan to the EPD to confirm that the CBPs would adopt the best practicable measures to control pollutants emission in order to meet the air quality objectives and to avoid impact on the nearby residents. After obtaining the licences issued by the EPD, the CBPs have to comply with the requirements of the licences, including proper operation of the plants and strict compliance with the measures for controlling air pollution. The EPD will inspect the CBPs from time to time and also follow up on-site upon receipt of complaints, ensuring that the plants have taken practicable measures to minimise air pollution impact of dust caused by CBPs on the nearby environment in accordance with the requirements of the licences.

From 2017 to date, the EPD has received 68 complaints related to environmental impacts by the CBPs in YTIA. These complaints are mainly related to air, noise and water quality pollution and other types of environmental pollution, among which air pollution is the most concerned. The EPD has carried out 141 inspections and issued 11 written warnings and three notices of prosecution to CBPs under the Air Pollution Control Ordinance, with two cases of successful prosecution; the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) has carried out 85 inspections in the YTIA under the Public Cleansing and Prevention of Nuisances Regulation and made 10 successful prosecutions against concrete delivery vehicles for bringing mud and concrete onto roads; the Hong Kong Police Force has carried out inspection in the vicinity of the CBPs under the Road Traffic Ordinance, including Ko Fai Road, Tung Yuen Street, Shung Tak Wai, and Shung Shun Street, and issued 7 876 Fixed Penalty Tickets, and will intensify inspection and prosecution for illegal parking. In view of the concern of nearby residents, the Government has just set up an inter-departmental working group to co-ordinate the pollution monitoring and implement mitigation measures to the CBPs in Yau Tong, where concerned departments will intensify inspection and law enforcement.

(2) and (3) The industrial sites in Yau Tong Industrial Area were rezoned from Industrial to Comprehensive Development Area (CDA), Residential (Group E) and Commercial by the Town Planning Board (TPB) in 1998. Through the change in land use zonings, land owners can redevelop the original industrial buildings and sites for private residential and/or commercial uses, which will gradually change the land uses of the area through market forces, and hence maximise the development potential and meet the development need of the society. As the industrial sites in YTIA is privately owned, future development and use of the land, and the time-table of redevelopment

programme are subject to commercial decision of land owners. While the Government may not have control over the pace of these market-led redevelopment projects and the original use at these sites continues to exist before redevelopment, we consider this as a necessary process of urban renewal to replace old with new. We can discuss how to expedite the process but should not see this as a contradiction within the town planning system.

In fact, since the rezoning in 1998, YTIA has been gradually transformed from a traditional industrial area in the past to a residential and commercial area where industrial uses of some sites were ceased operation for residential development. To expedite the urban renewal process more efficiently, TPB sub-divided the CDA zone in Tung Yuen Street and Yan Yue Wai into five smaller CDA zones in 2014 to allow land owner to apply for comprehensive residential development at individual CDA zone. Since 2016, TPB approved four planning applications for proposed comprehensive residential development in CDA zones, including planning applications for CDA(1) zone in Tung Yuen Street originally partly occupied by a CBP. The CBP has ceased operation, and land exchange for residential development has been completed. TPB is processing another planning application for proposed comprehensive residential development in CDA(4) zone covering another CBP in Tung Yuen Street, which has recently ceased operation. The applicant is required to submit an environment assessment report and propose appropriate mitigation measures to address environmental problems such as air pollution and noise arising from industrial and residential interface. The application will be submitted to TPB for consideration within this month tentatively.

In sum, concrete is an important construction material, and it is necessary to set up CBP in each major region to support the construction works within the region from an operational point of view. In planning term, CBP should be set up in an appropriate land use zoning in the long run to minimise the impacts on the surrounding. To this end, and in order to meet the needs of the construction industry and future development projects of both public and private sectors, the Government is proactively studying the feasibility to identify a suitable site in Tseung Kwan O Area 137 for market to set up a CBP, preferably a waterfront site to allow transporting raw materials for concrete production by waterborne transport to avoid increasing pressure on road traffic and minimise the impacts on residents from production and transportation of concrete.

Thank you, President.