

LCQ4: Development of lands surrounding various boundary crossings

Following is a question by the Hon Lau Kwok-fan and a reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (March 17):

Question:

There are views that the Government should optimise the use of the lands surrounding various boundary crossings in the New Territories in order to develop port economy and increase housing supply. However, the Government has not made holistic considerations in respect of the development of such lands, resulting in large tracts of agricultural land and fish ponds having been left deserted for a long time. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has compiled statistics on the current total area of the deserted agricultural lands and fish ponds surrounding various boundary crossings in the New Territories; of the plans in place to unleash their development potential; whether it will conduct an overall planning for the deserted lands, including rezoning such lands for the development of new development areas or new towns, thereby increasing housing supply;

(2) of its new thinking on putting the lands surrounding various boundary crossings in the New Territories to optimal use, e.g. whether it will construct office buildings for relevant government departments and develop a centre for innovative industries on such lands so as to develop a port economic zone, thereby better seizing the opportunities brought by the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it will consider setting up an ad hoc committee to study the implementation of, and conduct holistic planning for, the development projects on the lands surrounding various boundary crossings in the New Territories, as well as co-ordinate the implementation of the relevant projects; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

At present, apart from Shenzhen Bay Port, there are six land boundary control points at Hong Kong and Shenzhen boundary, including Lok Ma Chau, Lok Ma Chau Spur Line, Lo Wu, Man Kam To, Heung Yuen Wai and Sha Tau Kok. In planning the spatial layout of Hong Kong, consideration has been given to how to leverage the geographical advantages of the land near the boundary crossings with a view to meeting the demand for land in Hong Kong and

facilitating economic developments. The "Hong Kong 2030+: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030" study has recommended to develop a Northern Economic Belt in the northern part of New Territories. The economic belt, extending from Lok Ma Chau in the west to Heung Yuen Wai, is not only for increasing housing land but also for research and development, modern logistics, warehousing and other emerging industries. The Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park in the Lok Ma Chau Loop and the New Development Area (NDA) in the New Territories North (NTN) fall on this development axis. These developments can fully leverage the geographical advantages and development potential of the area.

Regarding the various parts of the question, after consulting the relevant policy bureaux and departments, I reply as follows:

(1) According to the information of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, currently the total area of agricultural land in Hong Kong is about 4 200 hectares, of which about 20 per cent is under active farming; and the total area of fish ponds is about 1 100 hectares, of which about 70 per cent is used for fish culture. These agricultural land and fish ponds are mainly located in the Northwest New Territories, with some near boundary control points. In the course of land use planning for the areas concerned, including planning for NDAs, full consideration is given to how the geographical advantages of the area can be leveraged. However, when considering the suitability of the land for development, whether the land is currently derelict is not of main consideration. Instead, the area, shape and topography of land, surrounding developments, any constraints on ecology and environment, and provision of infrastructure are more important.

(2) At present, we have included the areas in the vicinity of Lok Ma Chau, Lok Ma Chau Spur Line, Man Kam To, Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Control Points into the NTN NDA under planning.

The NTN NDA covers over 1 400 hectares of land, comprising of three Potential Development Areas (PDAs), i.e. San Tin/Lok Ma Chau Development Node, the NTN New Town (covering Heung Yuen Wai, Ping Che, Ta Kwu Ling, Hung Lung Hang and Queen's Hill) and Man Kam To Logistics Corridor. Our main planning concept is to build the new towns, the infrastructures and ancillary facilities through comprehensive planning and making optimal use of land including brownfield sites and agricultural land to meet the long-term social and economic developments of Hong Kong. The NTN NDA has easy access to and from Shenzhen and Eastern Guangdong, and possesses the geographical advantages for research and development, modern logistics, warehousing as well as emerging industries. Synergy can therefore be achieved with the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park in the Lok Ma Chau Loop and the scientific research and technology developments in the adjacent Shenzhen, thus capitalising the development opportunities in the Mainland. This is in line with the development strategy of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, under which the Central Government strongly supports the cooperation between Hong Kong and Shenzhen in developing an international innovation and technology hub.

Concerning the San Tin/Lok Ma Chau Development Node, a study has been commenced in September 2019. According to preliminary assessment, the Development Node covers about 320 hectares of land. In conjunction with the Northern Link under planning, it will have the potential for medium-to high-density developments with a capacity of producing about 31 000 residential flats, among which about 70 per cent will be for public housing, that can accommodate around 84 000 residents and generate around 64 000 job opportunities. Of the said area of land, about 50 hectares, i.e. about 18 per cent, will be designated for "Enterprise and Technology Park" for corporate offices and information and technology uses. This will tie in with the adjoining development of the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park in the Lok Ma Chau Loop and achieve synergy. In view that the Hong Kong and Shenzhen Governments have agreed on and obtained the Central Government's support for the implementation of the co-location arrangement at the redeveloped Huanggang Port, and thereby releasing over 20 hectares of land at the existing Lok Ma Chau Boundary Control Point for other uses, we will consider from a holistic point of view how to utilise such released land when planning for the Development Node.

The Man Kam To Logistics Corridor and NTN New Town, respectively in proximity of the Man Kam To Boundary Control Point and Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Control Point, cover an even larger area totalling about 1 140 hectares and are expected to accommodate not less than 200 000 residents and provide about 134 000 job opportunities in preliminary. We will explore how these areas can tie in with the development trend of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and formulate plans for new industries and new job opportunities in the area with a view to boosting Hong Kong's economic vibrancy, creating job opportunities in these areas, and thereby easing the problem of over-concentration of jobs in the urban areas. For example, we reserved 56 hectares of land in the proximity of Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Control Point for development of science park/industrial estate. The Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation has completed a visionary study for developing the land as a new industrial estate, and set out the mode and direction of development, and would commence the engineering and technical feasibility study in the second quarter in 2021.

In the course of planning NTN NDA, we will reserve land for government, institution and community facilities, including government offices, as appropriate. In fact, there are plans to orderly move out large government offices from core business areas to various locations for more effective use of land. In other NDAs, such as Hung Shui Kiu/Ha Tsuen NDA, land is also reserved for large-scale government complex facilities to serve the local community.

To take forward the three projects of NTN NDA, the Government intends to submit funding application to the Legislative Council in the first half of this year. The funding will cover the investigation and detailed design for San Tin/Lok Ma Chau Development Node, as well as the planning and engineering study for NTN New Town and Man Kam To Logistics Corridor in advance.

(3) The Government has set up appropriate steering and co-ordinating

mechanism at different levels to take forward land development. Under the Development Bureau, there is a team led by a directorate officer responsible for co-ordinating with relevant departments to offer holistic and comprehensive considerations at the land and project planning stage for the various NDAs in the New Territories and developments in the vicinity of the boundary crossings. There are also teams led by directorate officers under the Civil Engineering and Development Department to liaise closely with the relevant departments during the process of implementing the projects, so that the works of site formation, infrastructures and various public facilities are carried out in a timely and orderly manner. Currently, we do not have any plan to set up ad hoc committee specifically for developments in proximity to boundary crossing points.

Thank you, President.