

LCQ4: Diamond Hill Fresh Water and Salt Water Service Reservoirs site

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 (September 15):

Question:

The Government is currently implementing a plan of relocating Diamond Hill Fresh Water and Salt Water Service Reservoirs to caverns, and has commenced a feasibility study on the future uses of the four-hectare site to be vacated. The Government indicated in 2018 that the site concerned was preliminarily planned to be used for housing and community facilities purposes. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the timetable for and progress of the aforesaid feasibility study;
- (2) whether, according to the latest outcome of the feasibility study, it is feasible to provide housing on the site to be vacated; if so, of the details, including the number of public housing units that can be provided; and
- (3) as the Government indicated in 2019 that it had planned to reserve a certain area of land in the aforesaid site for redeveloping and expanding the Wong Tai Sin Hospital, of the area of land it currently plans to reserve, and whether the Hospital will, upon redevelopment and expansion, be provided with an accident and emergency (A&E) department, so as to resolve the problem of A&E patients of the Wong Tai Sin District having to seek medical consultation in other districts?

Reply:

President,

To support the sustainable development of Hong Kong, it is the established policy of the Government to adopt a multi-pronged approach to enhance land supply. Rock caverns are hidden land resources that can offer room to accommodate suitable public or infrastructural facilities, and to support the relocation of some above-ground facilities and reduce the amount of land occupied by them. The hilly and hard rock terrain of Hong Kong makes it highly suitable for developing rock caverns, particularly on the urban fringes. The relocation of suitable existing government facilities to caverns can on one hand release above-ground sites for housing and other uses to meet community needs, and on the other hand can relocate facilities that are incompatible with the surrounding environment and land uses nearby for improvement of the urban layout. Accordingly, the Government is actively exploring the use of rock cavern development to expand the land resources of Hong Kong and as a viable source of long-term land supply.

The Government is taking forward actively a number of projects for

relocating government facilities to caverns. Among them, the Water Supplies Department (WSD) completed the preliminary study of the relocation of Diamond Hill service reservoirs to caverns (to be located at the southern slope of Lion Rock) in 2016 and established the feasibility of the project. Currently, the WSD plans to seek the funding approval for the construction works of the relocation of service reservoirs to caverns from the Finance Committee next year. The construction works are targeted to be carried out from the second half of next year to 2027, and the site of existing service reservoirs can be released in the second half of 2027 the earliest for housing and other uses beneficial to the people's livelihood. To study and formulate concrete development plan for the vacated site, the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) commissioned the relevant feasibility study (the Study) in August 2019.

Having consulted the Food and Health Bureau (FHB), the reply to the various parts of the Hon Wilson Or's question is as follows:

(1) Regarding the future development of the existing site of the service reservoirs, the CEDD is currently carrying out the Study to formulate the development proposal for the proposed housing site, the number of flats and the community facilities to be provided, etc. The Study will formulate detailed land use recommendations, including housing types, "Government, Institution or Community" (G/IC) facilities, open space use, and the location and scale of infrastructure facilities. It also examines the traffic impact on the nearby areas caused by these development options and recommends corresponding mitigation measures. The Study also covers various technical assessments, such as the required site formation works, road construction works, water supply pipesworks, sewage and drainage works, slope stabilisation works and environmental impact assessments. The Study has now entered the final stage and is expected to be completed by the end of 2021.

In order to increase the housing supply as soon as possible, we target to commence the development works at the existing site immediately upon the completion of relocating the existing service reservoirs to the caverns (the relocation works). During the period when the WSD is carrying out the relocation works, we would concurrently undertake a series of preliminary works, including local consultation, land use rezoning procedures, detailed design for the infrastructures on the future site, and apply for project funding. We expect the site formation works will commence in the second half of 2027, immediately after the existing site of the service reservoirs is released.

(2) Diamond Hill Fresh Water and Salt Water Service Reservoirs, covering around 4 hectares (ha) of land, is adjacent to the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Wong Tai Sin Hospital (WTSB), Tsz Lok Estate and Chuk Yuen North Estate. With good transportation network nearby, the released site is suitable for housing development and other facilities beneficial to the community. According to the preliminary results of the Study, more than 2 500 housing flats can be provided at the released site, accommodating over 7 000 people. Our preliminary view is that the site can be concurrently used for public and private housing developments. The relevant details (such as the proportion of public and private housing and the concrete number of flats,

etc.) are however still subject to study. Various factors will be taken into account in the Study, including the impact on the surrounding environment, landscape, vision and traffic, and compatibility with nearby area, etc.

In addition to the housing development, part of the released site could be used for re-provisioning the football pitch and its ancillary facilities at the existing site of the service reservoirs, and providing some "G/IC" facilities, including the expansion of the WTSH.

(3) According to the FHB, in order to ensure that the medical needs of the community are met, the Hospital Authority (HA) regularly reviews the service capacity and physical conditions of its healthcare facilities for planning the redevelopment or expansion of existing hospitals and the development of new hospitals.

The WTSH is a convalescent and rehabilitation hospital established in 1965. Most of its buildings were constructed over 50 years ago and their physical conditions have deteriorated to an undesirable state. The existing facilities of the WTSH also lag behind modern health care standards. In view of this, the FHB is exploring the feasibility of redeveloping and expanding the WTSH under the Second Ten-year Hospital Development Plan by making use of part of the reserved site at the Diamond Hill Fresh Water and Salt Water Service Reservoirs after its relocation to cavern.

To dovetail with the FHB's and the HA's aforesaid plan, based on the preliminary results of the Study, about 0.4 ha of land on the vacated site has been reserved for the expansion of the the WTSH.

It is understood that based on the Clinical Services Plan (CSP) for the Kowloon Central Cluster, the HA has evaluated and assessed the long-term development direction of the WTSH. According to the CSP, the WTSH will serve as an extended care hospital. The accident and emergency service in Wong Tai Sin District will be provided by the New Acute Hospital at Kai Tak Development Area.