

LCQ9: New Territories North Development

Following is a question by the Hon Wu Chi-wai and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (October 28):

Question:

The Government commenced in 2015 a study on "Hong Kong 2030+: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030", which put forward the preliminary concepts for the New Territories North (NTN) Development and formulated the broad land use concepts for three potential development areas (PDAs) under the NTN Development, namely the San Tin/Lok Ma Chau Development Node, Man Kam To Logistics Corridor, and the NTN New Town (totalling some 720 hectares of development area). The report on the Preliminary Feasibility Study on Developing the New Territories North published by the Government in 2017 examined a spectrum of development thresholds with different characteristics, including increasing the development intensity in East NTN with the addition of transport infrastructure to accommodate a higher population closer to 400 000. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it has estimated the construction costs of the various infrastructure facilities to be provided for the NTN Development as proposed in the aforesaid study report; if so, of the details;
- (2) given that the aforesaid study report proposed the construction of a north-south railway, whether the Government has conducted the relevant study; if so, of the details; if not, whether it will do so expeditiously;
- (3) whether the Government has, after publishing the aforesaid study report, studied the feasibility of increasing the maximum sustainable population under the NTN Development; if so, of the latest projections for the population and residential units;
- (4) of the details of the Study on Phase One Development of New Territories North – San Tin/Lok Ma Chau Development Node – Feasibility Study commenced last year by the Government; whether the Government has conducted internal studies or commissioned consultants to conduct studies on the remaining two PDAs; if so, of the details;
- (5) of the areas of the following lands within the aforesaid three PDAs: (i) government-owned lands, (ii) privately owned lands (with a breakdown by brownfield sites, agricultural lands and other lands), and (iii) lands expected to be resumed for development; whether it has assessed the expenditure to be involved in land resumption; if so, of the details;
- (6) a breakdown of the areas of the lands within each of the aforesaid PDAs

by planned use;

(7) as the Government indicated in March this year that it had completed a review of 160 hectares of brownfield sites for assessing their suitability for public housing development, whether such brownfield sites include those located within the scope of the NTN Development; if so, of the details and the area (in hectares) of those sites, among these brownfield sites, that are suitable for public housing development; and

(8) of the latest planning and timetable for the NTN Development; whether it will expedite the implementation of the NTN Development so as to replace the large-scale reclamation projects under the "Lantau Tomorrow Vision" which have caused controversies?

Reply:

President,

The "Hong Kong 2030+: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030" (Hong Kong 2030+) proposes to develop two strategic growth areas, which are East Lantau Metropolis (i.e. the Kau Yi Chau artificial islands under Lantau Tomorrow Vision) and New Territories North new development area respectively, in order to deal with the unmet long term land demand and establish land reserve. After the Task Force on Land Supply recommended to include these projects as mid- to long-term measures in its report published in December 2018, the Government accepted the whole report in February 2019 and commenced the preparation work for the study for the two strategic growth areas.

The completed Preliminary Feasibility Study on Developing the New Territories North (NTN Preliminary Study) is a broad-brush planning study, which recommends that NTN comprises three development areas and further study is required before implementing the development proposals. In September last year, we firstly commenced the feasibility study of San Tin/Lok Ma Chau Development Node (STLMC DN), which is in good progress. In early next year, we would consult stakeholders on the preliminary land use proposals, and then submit funding application to the Legislative Council. If funding is approved, we would commence the remaining study and detailed design for the STLMC DN in the latter half of the next year and strive to commence early the planning and engineering study for the other two development areas (i.e. the NTN New Town (see note) and Man Kam To Logistics Corridor) in the next year.

As land is in severe shortage, we would proceed flexibly by allowing those more mature individual projects in the area to go ahead first. Taking Queen's Hill within the NTN New Town as an example, even the development potential of the new town is still subject to study, we first implement the public housing project in Queen's Hill as the technical conditions permit. The project covers an area of more than 13 hectares, and over 12 000 public housing flats would be occupied progressively from next year. In addition, we reserve 56 hectares of land near the Liantang Port/Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Control Point within the same new town. The Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation is carrying out a visionary study on developing this piece

of land into an industrial estate.

With reference to the various parts of the question, after consulting relevant departments, I reply as follows:

(1) and (2) The two development scenarios proposed by the NTN Preliminary Study both provide 215 000 jobs and accommodate 255 000 and 350 000 population respectively. The main difference is that the NTN New Town would have different building intensity under the two scenarios. Irrespective of the development scenarios, substantial provision of drainage, sewerage, water supply and transport infrastructure is required. Taking transportation as an example, the two development scenarios both propose that the development of STLMC DN would be driven by the Northern Link and the proposed San Tin Station. In addition, it also proposes to study a new north-south railway connecting the NTN New Town and the nearby new town, and further connecting the north-south railway to other new towns or/and urban area under the higher population development scenario as well as to improve the north-south road network.

The proposed development scenarios and associated infrastructure in the NTN Preliminary Study are conceptual proposals. Before implementing the new development area, we need to carry out further study and review those factors that affect development in the past few years and future so as to determine the land uses, development parameters, required infrastructure etc. and to carry out detailed design so as to confirm the project scale, land resumption and clearance extent and implementation timetable. By that time, better estimation of project cost would be available.

If funding approval of the Finance Committee (FC) is obtained, the Transport and Housing Bureau (THB) would commence the Strategic Studies on Railways and Major Roads beyond 2030 (RMR2030+ Studies) as soon as possible. The RMR2030+ Studies would, be based on the finalised development strategies and other relevant considerations under the Hong Kong 2030+, explore the strategic layout of railway and main road infrastructure, including the north-south railway and road proposed above so as to support the development of the NTN New Town. When carrying out the planning and engineering study on the NTN New Town as stated above, we would coordinate with the THB to handle well the interface between the two studies regarding the new north-south direction transportation infrastructure.

(3) and (4) According to the NTN Preliminary Study, the proposed development scale of the STLMC DN is of 55 000 population, about 20 000 flats and 80 000 jobs. The feasibility study commenced in September last year recommends that opportunities arising from the Northern Link and proposed San Tin Station could be fully capitalised to further increase flat supply and accommodate population. In addition, from the perspective of enhancing home-job balance, having regard to the geographic location of the development node and its economic functions, the innovation and technology development within the Lok Ma Chau Loop and the arrangements for people and goods flow between Hong Kong and Shenzhen in future, the study would review the economic land uses within the development node. When we announce the preliminary land uses of the STLMC DN in early next year, we would also state the latest thinking on flat supply

and economic land uses.

As stated above, we would strive to commence the planning and engineering study of the remaining development areas (i.e. the NTN New Town and Man Kam To Logistics Corridor) in the next year. The NTN Preliminary Study proposed that these two development areas could accommodate 200 000 to 300 000 population and 134 000 jobs with the new population mainly in the NTN New Town. The development of this new town requires substantial improvement of transport and other infrastructure (north-south railway and road as stated above), which require further study on their feasibility. If technically feasible and economically effective, we would explore the maximum population capacity of the NTN New Town in the planning and engineering study to be carried out in the next step.

(5) and (6) The NTN Preliminary Study broadly estimated that the development land of the three development areas is about 720 hectares, more than half are private land with the remaining are Government land. In the 720 hectares, about 200 hectares are of brownfield, and there is also active agricultural land (no concrete figure). More accurate estimation of the cost for land resumption and clearance, rehousing and compensation would be available after confirming the development and project extent.

Recommending the land use distribution and rezoning of the three development areas would be carried out after completion of the study and required technical assessments. The existing outline zoning plans only show the original planned land uses.

(7) The 160 hectares brownfield that have already been reviewed do not include the brownfield within the NTN new development area; while the latter will be reviewed in the studies on the NTN new development area.

(8) Regarding the Kau Yi Chau artificial islands, we obtained support from the Public Works Subcommittee in May 2019 for the study funding, and are preparing to seek approval from the FC so as to commence as early as possible the planning and engineering study, and the feasibility study of the associated strategic transportation system. As pointed out in the Hong Kong 2030+, Hong Kong needs two strategic growth areas to meet the long-term land demand. The functions and challenges of them are different. The development of NTN makes good use of existing land, improve the rural environment, but inevitably affect the existing land users such as squatter inhabitants, brownfield operators and farmers etc. On the other hand, some of the people in the community have concerns on the artificial island project, but reclamation is the only means to create new land. As there is no need for clearance and rehousing, the project timing is more certain. In addition, we propose to study the development of artificial islands around Kau Yi Chau having considered the great public benefits to Hong Kong, including public housing supply, relieving traffic congestion, and increase in employment opportunities etc. In other words, NTN and the Kau Yi Chau artificial islands are not options of which only one can be chosen out of the two.

Note: The NTN New Town include Heung Yuen Wai, Ping Che, Ta Kwu Ling, Hung Lung Hang and Queen's Hill.