

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL BRIEF URBAN DESIGN STUDY FOR THE NEW CENTRAL HARBOURFRONT

INTRODUCTION

At the meeting of the Executive Council on 3 November 2009, the Council took note of –

- (a) the result of the Stage 2 Public Engagement of the Urban Design Study for the New Central Harbourfront (the Study);
- (b) the revised design concepts and proposals for the key sites in the Study and the revised Master Layout Plan (MLP); and
- (c) the next steps we propose to take.

RESULT OF STAGE 2 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

2. During the three-month Stage 2 Public Engagement of the Study from 11 April to end July 2008, public views were widely canvassed through a full range of public engagement activities including exhibitions, focus group workshop, community engagement forum, comment cards, interviews and telephone polls. The public was also invited to submit written comments. In addition, we have commissioned the Public Policy Research Institute of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University to analyse, both quantitatively and qualitatively, the responses from various sources to provide an independent summary of the public opinions obtained.

3. The public response gathered in the Stage 2 Public Engagement generally supported the overall urban design vision and the sustainable and balanced design approach¹, which is consistent with the public aspiration for a vibrant, green and accessible new Central harbourfront.

¹ Our urban design vision is to create a vibrant, green and accessible new Central harbourfront that is symbolic of Hong Kong and that we are all proud of. The sustainability assessment indicates that the refined urban design framework would bring a range of benefits particularly in the economic, social and mobility aspects.

4. However, some stakeholders including harbour concern groups, professional bodies and developers had different views and put forth alternative proposals. Their main proposals included deletion of the proposed hotel and office developments to the north of International Finance Centre (IFC) II, removal of the planned public transport interchange (PTI) from Site 2 and the provision of an “inner harbour” or a “lagoon” in association with the reassembly of Queen’s Pier (QP) at its original location. Details of the Stage 2 Public Engagement findings are summarized at Annex A.

A

RECOMMENDATIONS OF TASK GROUP ON URBAN DESIGN STUDY FOR THE NEW CENTRAL HARBOURFRONT

5. In December 2008, we briefed the Task Group on Urban Design Study for the New Central Harbourfront (TGUDS) of the Harbour-front Enhancement Committee (HEC) on the findings of the Stage 2 Public Engagement and our initial response. Subsequently, the TGUDS held a public forum in February 2009 to hear the presentation of the alternative proposals and the views of the public on them. The TGUDS presented its recommendations (Annex B) to the Administration and HEC in August 2009.

B

6. Overall, throughout the process, we have been able to address the concerns raised by the TGUDS on the design and development of the new Central harbourfront and take on board most of its recommendations, including the reduction of development intensity of Sites 1 and 2 announced in the Chief Executive’s 2009-10 Policy Address as part of the “Conserving Central” initiatives. As regards the reassembling of QP, the majority of the non-official members of the TGUDS prefer reassembling QP at its original location with a large lagoon in front of it². However, the summary of public responses indicates that the in-situ reassembly option clearly commands less public support. Taking account of this and the support of the District Councils (16 of the 18 District Councils

² The “lagoon” proposal has been assessed by concerned technical departments. No major insurmountable technical problem is envisaged. However, locating QP at its original location with a large lagoon would mean that 700 metres of the 1,000-metre Road P2 in Central Reclamation Phase III (the relevant section of Road P2 is scheduled for opening by early 2010) would need to be realigned. The timing of reassembling QP would also be delayed by one year to 2014. The realigned Road P2 would diagonally bisect part of Sites 3 and 4, and the proposed north-south pedestrian link extending from the core of the Central Business District to the new Star Ferry Piers would be compromised. It is not favoured from a planning and urban design point of view.

consulted, including the Central and Western District Council where the Central harbourfront is located, passed a motion in support of reassembling QP by the harbour to revive its pier function for public use), we informed the HEC and announced in public in August 2009 that we would reassemble QP at the harbourfront between Central Piers 9 and 10.

REVISED PLANNING AND URBAN DESIGN PROPOSALS AND MASTER LAYOUT PLAN

7. Taking into account the public views received in the Stage 2 Public Engagement and the recommendations of the TGUDS, we have revised the planning and urban design proposals as well as the MLP for the new Central harbourfront (Annexes C and D). The details are summarized in paragraphs 8 -17 below.

C

D

Sites 1 and 2 (“Comprehensive Development Area” (“CDA”) and “Commercial” (“C”) sites adjoining Central Piers 4 to 6 and IFC II)

8. Victoria Harbour is Hong Kong’s greatest natural asset. In his 2008-09 Policy Address, the Chief Executive announced that we would undertake projects to beautify and revitalise harbourfront areas. The Central harbourfront has the potential to become an icon of our city. Seen against the public aspirations for the harbour, we can appreciate the resistance against more commercial developments on Sites 1 and 2. Taking into account the public views and the support in the TGUDS for reducing the development intensity of Sites 1 and 2 and redistributing the Gross Floor Area (GFA) to other locations to improve viewing of our magnificent harbour, we have revised the design concept for the two sites. The revised design concept comprises the following:

- (a) a change from proposed hotel and office developments to a vibrant, attractive and accessible civic node primarily for public enjoyment of the harbourfront;
- (b) a mixed-use precinct featuring a low-rise iconic development made up of a 6-storey block and two 2-storey blocks (total GFA of 22,520m²) with distinctive architectural expression and comprehensive master planning. Possible uses include exhibition showcasing Hong Kong, civic and “Government, Institution or Community” (“G/IC”) uses, retail, dining, entertainment, etc.;

- (c) a large landscaped deck connecting the Central Business District (CBD) to the new harbourfront and providing about 1.7 hectares of public open space including a central plaza for festive events;
- (d) one and a half additional commercial floors for dining, retail and other waterfront related uses above Central Piers 4 to 6 (making up a total commercial GFA of about 12,600m² at the piers), and coordinated exterior design of these additional floors and roofscape enhancement to Central Piers 2 and 3;
- (e) deletion of the PTI originally planned for Site 2 to allow more ground level space and street level activities. The existing public transport facilities at Site 2 will be redistributed to the ferry pier area and other sites close to the new Central harbourfront; and
- (f) as recommended by the TGUDS, the reduction in commercial GFA at Sites 1 and 2 will be fully re-provided at Site 5.

The above redesigned Sites 1 and 2 and the consequential change of use of Site 5 form an important part in the Government's latest blueprint on "Conserving Central" as outlined in the Chief Executive's 2009-10 Policy Address.

Site 3 ("CDA" north of Statue Square)

9. The reduction in GFA (from 190,000m² to 157,400m²) as proposed in the Stage 2 exercise is welcomed. The development of office/retail in separated blocks and a larger landscaped deck as proposed have adequately addressed previous public concern. We will introduce refinements to enhance the pedestrian connections and visual permeability (e.g. with more sunken courtyards and openings), as well as the built form of the landscaped deck. We will adopt more variation of building heights for the five building blocks ranging from +30mPD to +50mPD to complement the revised design concept for Sites 1 and 2.

10. We will reconstruct the old Star Ferry Clock Tower at its original location in Site 3 and build a new Clock Tower Gallery for exhibiting the salvaged items of the pier. The design will be integrated with the

surroundings and the development of the “CDA” site.

Site 4 (“Other Specified Uses (“OU”) (Waterfront related Commercial and Leisure Uses)” site north of City Hall)

11. Views expressed during the public engagement suggest that there is a strong preference for smaller open courtyard spaces that could create an intimate environment, better streetscape and more leisurely walking experience. We have accordingly revised the proposed building form, disposition and massing of development for Site 4 while maintaining the GFA as proposed during the Stage 2 Public Engagement. In the revised concept, three separate 2-storey blocks for waterfront related dining and leisure uses set against a series of courtyard spaces fronting Road P2, which will be designed as a tree-lined boulevard, are proposed. The courtyards will act as a landscape and visual buffer as viewed from City Hall while creating a more open and attractive harbourfront environment.

Site 5 (“G/IC” site north of CITIC Tower)

12. We see merit in TGUDS’s recommendation that the loss in commercial GFA in Sites 1 and 2 could be redistributed to Site 5. In recognition of the increasing prominence of Wan Chai North as an extension of the CBD, and better connectivity between Site 5 and Admiralty upon the completion of the Tamar Government Office Complex, Site 5 will be used for office and hotel development. It is estimated that about 58,000m² GFA for hotel and office development (involving a maximum height of about 80mPD) can be provided on the site, replacing the originally planned “G/IC” use (but with no specific designated use)³ and offsetting the loss of GFA in Sites 1 and 2. The site will need to be rezoned from “G/IC” to “C” or “CDA” on the Central District (Extension) OZP, which can be pursued at a later stage.

13. The rezoning of Site 5 for commercial development will give rise to potential of further increasing the supply of Grade A offices in the

³ Notwithstanding the change in land use of Site 5, two sites in the vicinity of Site 5 in the Wan Chai North area have been earmarked for the future expansion of arts and cultural facilities, namely the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts Extension and the proposed Hong Kong Visual Arts Education Centre.

vicinity. This would involve an additional medium-scale office development site (approximately 21,000m² GFA) to the south of Site 5, now occupied by the Red Cross Headquarters and Water Supplies Department's Harcourt Road Fresh Water Pumping Station, the relocation of which is being actively explored. Together with this site, the new Central harbourfront will yield a total of about 90,000m² GFA for Grade A offices.

Site 6 (“OU (Waterfront related Commercial and Leisure Uses)” site north of CITIC Tower)

14. While the design of the waterfront related commercial and leisure uses highlighting the marine theme of the area was generally supported by the public, there were suggestions for further improving the pedestrian connectivity in the area to the west of the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. We have devised an integrated pedestrian walkway system to connect the hinterland to the waterfront through the proposed public open space, Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts (HKAPA) extension and Hong Kong Visual Arts Education Centre in the arts and cultural precinct. It will be used for activities to enhance vibrancy and the pedestrian experience, as recommended by the TGUDS.

Site 7 (Waterfront Promenade)

15. A two-kilometre continuous waterfront promenade at the new harbourfront and 11 hectares of public open space will be provided. While there was greater support from the public for a more natural form of landscaping and more greenery at the waterfront, there were many requests for adding more nodal attractions to make the waterfront promenade more vibrant. Hence, we have consolidated the design merits in these two design concepts to provide more greenery (such as different forms of green lawn and planting areas) in the waterfront promenade while better defining the attraction nodes including plazas, viewing platform, etc. To further enhance the vibrancy of the harbourfront, an area within Site 7, to the north of Site 4, has been designed to cater for alfresco dining within the waterfront promenade. We have also refined the promenade design to better integrate the PLA berth⁴ and various utility building structures such as underground pump

⁴ The PLA berth will be part of the waterfront promenade and open for public access when it is not in military use.

houses, electricity supply buildings, vent shafts, etc.

16. In response to public suggestions, a cycle track will be provided within the waterfront promenade for recreational and leisure uses. Provision for other environmentally friendly transport modes such as electric cars will also be considered, subject to detailed assessment and design.

Site 8 (“OU (Waterfront related Commercial and Leisure Uses)” site near Central Piers 9 and 10)

17. As QP will be reassembled by the harbour to revive its pier function, the exterior design for Central Piers 9 and 10 will be refurbished. The design of the adjacent new pier plaza and public open space will be further refined to integrate with the reassembled QP. Memorial elements will be added at the original site of QP, for instance through paving and landscaping design, to commemorate the historical significance of QP.

DEVELOPMENT INTENSITY

18. As a result of the revised design concepts, the total GFA for Sites 1 and 2 will be reduced from about 92,000m² under the Stage 2 Public Engagement to approximately 35,000m². This loss in GFA will be fully compensated in Site 5 with the revised proposed hotel and office developments creating some 58,000m² GFA.

THE NEXT STEPS

19. We will brief the Legislative Council Panel on Development’s Subcommittee on Harbourfront Planning on the result of the Stage 2 Public Engagement, the revised design concepts and proposals for the key sites, and the revised MLP on 9 November 2009. We will also report the developments to the Town Planning Board as the Study is carried out in response to the Town Planning Board’s request.

Expression of Interest (EOI) Exercise for Sites 1 and 2

20. The design concepts for Sites 1 and 2 will project a distinctive identity of the area as a civic icon of quality design with a “mixed-use” urban precinct featuring a variety of nodal attractions reserved for civic and “G/IC” uses. It will also be a venue for hosting cultural, exhibition, commercial, tourism and festive activities. We intend to develop the sites by public-private partnership (PPP), through a design, build and operate approach under a land lease in order to capture the creativity and expertise of the private sector while ensuring public enjoyment of the development. The sites and the construction thereon will be returned to Government when the proposed lease expires.

21. We will ascertain private sector’s interest through an EOI exercise before formal tender is issued. We will consult the HEC, who is all for the Administration adopting the more innovative PPP approach in enhancing the management of harbourfront areas. There will be adequate government supervision of the construction and management of the new developments. Given that the private sector partner will be constructing and managing the buildings and facilities on a prime site, we must ensure that the public purpose of optimizing the use of 22,520m² of GFA⁵ will bring forth a mix of civic and community activities in addition to commercial activities. The private sector partner will also be required to design, build and operate the connecting landscaped deck as a major open-air venue for hosting special events to take advantage of the harbourfront location, to provide un-interrupted north-south access between the CBD and the Central Piers, and east-west access between Site 3 and Sheung Wan, and be responsible for external design of the floors above Central Piers 4 to 6 and roofscape enhancement of Central Piers 2 to 3 for a coordinated design of this new civic precinct.

22. The HEC has studied various overseas and local experiences in PPP. We will work with the HEC to devise the suitable terms for PPP which would, on the one hand, leverage on the expertise and creativity of the private sector, while on the other hand, ensure public accountability and transparency, preferably with a degree of community involvement in the management of the area.

⁵ Within the 22,520m² of GFA, the private sector partner will be required to provide 3,130m² of GFA for “G/IC” uses, based on the revised proposal.

Other Implementation Issues

23. Reassembly of QP by the waterfront would necessitate works on the foreshore and seabed. Hence, authorization under the Foreshore and Sea-bed (Reclamations) Ordinance (Cap. 127) will be necessary. Application to Legislative Council for additional funding (about \$220M) is required for reconstruction of seawall caissons, ground stabilization works and refurbishment of Central Piers 9 and 10. Planning approval from Town Planning Board will be sought for QP to be reassembled between Central Piers 9 and 10.

24. For reconstruction of the old Star Ferry Clock Tower at its original location at Site 3 together with a Clock Tower Gallery, the additional cost for constructing the foundation for a supporting deck to span over an existing box culvert would be in the order of \$20M. To tie in with the commissioning of the Tamar Development in 2011, an initial section of the waterfront promenade linking Tamar with the Central Piers 9 and 10 will be provided.

25. As set out in paragraphs 20-22 above, Sites 1 and 2 will be disposed of by PPP and we will launch an EOI exercise when ready. However, the land sale programme for other key sites would hinge upon the completion of the Central Reclamation Phase III and other infrastructure projects. Amendments to the Central District (Extension) OZP will be pursued at a later stage to change Site 5 from “G/IC” to “C” or “CDA” uses (paragraph 12 above) and to reflect the reduction in reclamation area under the Wan Chai Development Phase II project.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSAL

26. The economic, financial and civil service, environmental and sustainability implications of the revised proposals are at Annex E. The proposals are in conformity with the Basic Law, including the provisions concerning human rights, and have no productivity implications.

E

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

27. The Town Planning Board, the Legislative Council Panel on Development and Panel on Home Affairs, all District Councils, academic and professional institutes, relevant public and advisory bodies and the general public have been fully engaged in the course of the Study in the Stage 2 Public Engagement. The HEC and its TGUDS have been actively involved in the Study since inception in late 2007. The Administration has responded to the recommendations put forth by the TGUDS at the HEC meeting on 17 August 2009.

PUBLICITY

28. Details on the refined urban design framework and design concepts for the key sites will be uploaded onto the government website.

SUBJECT OFFICER

29. The subject officer is Ms Alice Cheung, Principal Assistant Secretary (Harbour), Development Bureau (Tel: 2186 6328).

**Planning and Lands Branch
Development Bureau
3 November 2009**