

**Speaking Points of the Secretary for Development
at the Special Finance Committee Meeting (Planning and Lands)
on 17 April 2024 (Wednesday)**

Chairman,

In 2024-25, the priority tasks on the Planning and Lands portfolio under the purview of the Development Bureau (DEVB) will continue to follow the principle of enhancing quantity, speed, efficiency and quality.

Enhancing Speed and Efficiency in Increasing Land Supply

2. On land supply, we will continue to press ahead with the Northern Metropolis (NM) and other land creation projects. In doing so, we will strike a good balance among different aspects in ensuring sufficient land supply to meet the needs of development and improve the quality of life. We also hope to build up a land reserve in the long run, so as to enhance the Government's capability of spearheading development and responding to unforeseen changes. As regards how and when the developable land is to be put to the market, we will also take into account the sustainability of public finance and the market's capability of absorbing the new land.

3. The NM is an important source of supply of spade-ready sites and housing for the next decade as well as the new engine for Hong Kong's development. This year will see the commencement of site formation and infrastructure works in several New Development Areas, among which the funding applications for the works under the Second Phase of Hung Shui Kiu/Ha Tsuen and the Remaining Phase of Kwu Tung North/Fanling North are being scrutinised by the Legislative Council (LegCo). We also plan to submit the funding application for the first stage of site formation and infrastructure works in San Tin Technopole in the second half of this year. We look forward to Members' support and the early commencement of the works. The land use proposals for other major areas in the NM including Ngau Tam Mei, Ma Tso Lung and New Territories North will also be rolled out progressively in the second half of this year.

4. We will offer opportunities for landowners to jointly develop the NM by means of the in-situ land exchange arrangements that have been improved at the end of last year, with a view to leveraging on market forces to expedite the development of the NM. We will also explore the adoption of “large-scale land disposal” to improve cash flow and expedite development. In addition, as announced in this year’s Budget, the Government’s bond issuance of about \$95 billion to \$135 billion per annum in the next five years will be beneficial to the NM development.
5. “Industry-driven” is one of the themes for the NM development. We launched the tender under the “two-envelope” approach in mid-March for the first site designated for developing Multi-storey Buildings for Modern Industries (MSBs) in Yuen Long for modern logistics or vehicle maintenance and servicing purposes, with a view to promoting development of industries as well as providing part of the gross floor area to accommodate brownfield operations displaced by government projects. If feedback is positive, we would expedite in rolling out similar MSB sites using the same approach. With the commencement of the relevant works, sites for other industries including the I&T sites in San Tin Technopole, and the commercial or logistics sites in Hung Shui Kiu are expected to be rolled out progressively.
6. As for private housing land supply, as I have introduced at the Annual Land Sale Programme Press Conference in end-February, taking into account the eight residential sites in the 2024-25 Land Sale Programme and other sources, private housing land supply in 2024-25 is estimated to have a capacity to produce more than 15 000 flats.
7. To enhance speed and efficiency, we will continue our efforts to streamline administrative procedures and will present a briefing to the Panel on Development later this year. With standardisation being one of the working directions, we will keep in view the implementation of the land premium standard rates for industrial buildings and agricultural land in the New Territories just announced this month. We will also do our best to assist the LegCo in its scrutiny of the bill in relation to lease extension.

Urban Renewal

8. In respect of “enhancing quality”, urban renewal and ensuring building safety are our key priorities. Our strategy in this regard is a dual-track approach of building maintenance and redevelopment. In respect of building maintenance and safety, the incidents of spalling concrete from the external walls of numerous buildings and the cases of large-scale unauthorised building works (UBWs) happened last year as well as the recent fire incident of an old building in Jordan reflect that owners have not taken government directives seriously, and that the Government’s enforcement efforts are inadequate. In the face of this situation, we have to vigorously enhance the effectiveness of law enforcement in an effort to urge owners to fulfil their responsibilities, while at the same time strengthening the provision of appropriate assistance to owners in need of help.

Review of the Buildings Ordinance

9. We are pressing ahead with the review of the Buildings Ordinance. Targeting the non-complied notices under the Mandatory Building Inspection Scheme (MBIS) and Mandatory Window Inspection Scheme as well as illegal building works such as UBWs, we will streamline prosecution procedures and increase the penalties, so as to more effectively combat contraventions. In respect of construction safety, we will increase the penalties in parallel and impose stricter regulation on contractors through the registration and disciplinary systems. We will put forward proposals this year to gauge the views of the public and the industry, with a view to initiating the legislative amendment exercise as soon as possible.

Proper Handling of Building Maintenance Cases

10. We briefed the Panel on Development in February this year on our efforts to enhance building safety and maintenance, including annual inspection of the external walls of 360 buildings with higher risk, and carrying out the emergency works for high-risk external walls if needed and seeking to recover the cost from owners concerned afterwards; identification of high-risk buildings in a more precise

manner for issuance of MBIS notices; and provision of assistance to the owners participating in the Operation Building Bright 2.0 to accelerate the pace for inspection and repairs of their buildings.

Fire Safety in Buildings

11. In the wake of fire incident in Jordan, we will step up fire safety enforcement and prosecution on various fronts, including allocating more manpower through internal redeployment to step up prosecution, and reprioritising enforcement and focus resources for handling high risk buildings such as single-staircase buildings, those with more guesthouses or sub-divided units, and those with non-complied MBIS notices and have yet to appoint a registered inspector. The Fire Services Department will join the collaboration platform led by the DEVB to assist owners' corporations/owners in complying with Fire Safety Directions by strengthening co-ordination of case management and enhancing public education on the district level together with the Buildings Department, the Home Affairs Department and the Urban Renewal Authority (URA).

Redevelopment of Old Buildings

12. In respect of dilapidated buildings, redevelopment may be more cost effective. To further encourage redevelopment through private initiatives, we have introduced a bill into the LegCo to update and streamline the legislation on compulsory sale. We will endeavour to co-operate with the Bills Committee in its scrutiny work, so as to expedite the redevelopment of old and dilapidated buildings with good use of private market forces while at the same time safeguarding the interests of minority owners.
13. In parallel, we continue to support the URA in taking forward its redevelopment projects, among which the urban renewal master plans and restructuring proposals in relation to the planning studies for Tsuen Wan and Sham Shui Po will be ready by phases from the second half of the year at the earliest.

Building a Liveable City

14. On harbourfront development, we will introduce commercial facilities such as food and beverages, retail and entertainment on a pilot basis at the Victoria harbourfront. The first new attempt is to set up smart specialty vending facilities at the Wan Chai and Cha Kwo Ling promenades progressively from mid-2024 onwards, providing light snacks and beverages while attracting visitors. In addition, there are other initiatives which have been mentioned in our replies to Members' questions, and I am not going to repeat them one by one here.
15. In addition, the DEVB will also continue to develop and enhance the Common Spatial Data Infrastructure in an effort to facilitate the development of digital economy.
16. The above is a brief report. We will be happy to respond to any further questions that Members may wish to raise. Thank you.