

Harbour-front Enhancement Committee

Wan Chai Development Phase II –

Planning and Engineering Review

PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members on the scope, approach, methodology and programme of the Planning and Engineering Review of Wan Chai Development Phase II (WDII).

2. WDII is to make provision for key transport infrastructure and facilities along the northern shore of Hong Kong Island including the Trunk Road comprising the Central – Wan Chai Bypass (CWB) and Island Eastern Corridor Link (IECL) and their associated connections to the existing road network, the proposed fourth rail harbour crossing and the Hong Kong Island section of the Shatin to Central Link, and the proposed North Hong Kong Island Line.

3. The CWB and IECL Trunk Road is the final and most vital road link that is currently missing on the northern shore of Hong Kong Island. This conduit is needed to divert through traffic away from the Central Business District, to cater for anticipated traffic growth beyond 2006 and to alleviate congestion on existing road networks (already operating at capacity) that feed into Central from the east to the west, and vice versa. Without Central Reclamation Phase III (CRIII) and WDII, the CWB and IECL Trunk Road cannot be built and there will be a “missing link” between Kennedy Town and Causeway Bay along the northern shore of the Hong Kong Island,

as well as in the territory-wide strategic road network.

BACKGROUND

The Court Judgments

4. In July 2003, the High Court, in ruling a judicial review initiated by the Society for Protection of the Harbour Limited on the Town Planning Board's decisions regarding the draft Wan Chai North Outline Zoning Plan (OZP), quashed the Board's decisions and ordered that the OZP should be referred back to the Board for reconsideration. The Board appealed the judgment to the Court of Final Appeal (CFA) direct.

5. In October 2003, the Board, after considering the findings of a preliminary planning assessment on the draft Wan Chai North OZP conducted by the Planning Department (PlanD) according to the High Court's "three tests"¹, requested the Government to carry out a comprehensive planning and engineering review of WDII.

6. The CFA delivered its judgment on the Board's appeal case on 9 January 2004. The judgment gives a definitive interpretation on the principles found in the Protection of the Harbour Ordinance to protect and preserve the Harbour as a special public asset and a natural heritage of Hong Kong people, and a formulation of the "overriding public need test" to replace the High Court's "three test". Please refer to Paper 2/2004 for more details of the "overriding public need test".

The Review

7. In response to the Board's request and in light of the CFA judgment, the Government has undertaken to conduct a planning and engineering

¹ The High Court judgment of 8 July 2003 states that the three tests of "compelling, overriding and present need", "no viable alternative", and "minimum impairment to the Harbour" have to be met before the presumption against reclamation set out under the Protection of the Harbour Ordinance can be rebutted.

review of the development and reclamation proposals for the WDII project. In this context, the Territory Development Department (TDD) has appointed Maunsell Consultants Asia Limited (MCAL) to conduct the Review, which commenced on 11 March 2004. Considering the pressing public need for the key transport infrastructure to be provided under WDII, especially the CWB and IECL Trunk Road and their associated connections to the existing road network, there is an urgency to carry out the WDII Review with a view to an early delivery of the key transport infrastructure to meet the public need.

8. A copy of the Inception Report prepared by MCAL is at Annex A. The scope, approach, methodology and programme of the WDII Review will be presented in the following.

PLANNING AND ENGINEERING REVIEW OF WDII

Review Area

9. The western border of the review area is the eastern construction limit of the CRIII project near Lung King Street. The eastern border is the eastern breakwater of the Causeway Bay Typhoon Shelter. The Review area is shown in Figure No. 1.1 of the Inception Report. The area to be reviewed includes the planning scheme area of the draft Wan Chai North OZP and part of that of the Central District (Extension) OZP.

Scope of Review

10. The Review is a planning and engineering review of development and reclamation proposals for the WDII project in accordance with the CFA's single "overriding public need test". It will assess individually the purpose and extent of each proposed area of reclamation to see whether they satisfy the CFA's test. Specific objectives of the WDII project include –

- (a) To confirm the optimum layout with respect to the functionality and traffic performance of the CWB and IECL Trunk Road and, where

there may be consequential reclamation, with respect to meeting the CFA's "overriding public need test";

- (b) To confirm the layout of the at-grade and elevated roads (the "ground level roads") with respect to the functionality and traffic performance and, where there may be consequential reclamation, with respect to meeting the CFA's "overriding public need test";
- (c) To confirm any necessary reprovisioning requirements arising from the implementation of either the Trunk Road or the ground level roads and, should these result in further reclamation, to justify the need for this reprovisioning and the associated reclamation in compliance with the CFA's "overriding public need test";
- (d) To update the land use planning proposals to reflect the changes in planning in compliance with the CFA's "overriding public need test", and to produce a master landscape plan for the waterfront promenade, which must be developed within the extent of land formed for the transport infrastructure; and
- (e) To confirm that the new project proposals are viable in respect of engineering feasibility, environmental impacts, land requirements, costs and implementation aspects.

11. The assumption in reviewing the provision of land for essential transport infrastructure is that reclamation must be minimized or even eliminated wherever possible, and any necessary infrastructure requiring reclamation must be justified in respect of the CFA's "overriding public need test". It is the project proponent's responsibility to produce such justification.

12. If revision to the previously proposed extent of reclamation and/or land uses is required, a revised draft Recommended Outline Development Plan and sufficient information for PlanD to prepare the revised draft OZPs will be produced under the Review. Previous findings of the various Engineering Impact Assessments of the WDII Comprehensive Feasibility

Study (i.e., the Engineering Feasibility Study, Transport and Traffic Impact Assessment Study, Drainage Impact Assessment Study and Environmental Impact Assessment Study) and similar assessments under the Trunk Road project will also be reviewed and necessary work for enabling the preparation of draft gazettal drawings for the proposed reclamation, at-grade roads and the Trunk Road by TDD and Highways Department respectively will be carried out.

Approach and Methodology of Review

13. As the main purpose of the WDII project is to provide land for the construction of the key transport infrastructure, especially the CWB and IECL Trunk Road, the Review will start by reviewing the alignment of the Trunk Road, including the various options previously investigated under the WDII Comprehensive Feasibility Study, essential connections with at-grade roads and the extent of reclamation required for the Trunk Road by reference to the CFA's "overriding public need test".

14. The interface of the options on existing facilities like the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club and Causeway Bay Typhoon Shelter will be addressed. The scope of reprovisioning works arising from reclamation for the Trunk Road, means of reprovisioning and extent of additional reclamation required will also be reviewed.

15. The second element to be reviewed is the at-grade road system (i.e. the Road P2 network and connections with the existing road network in Wan Chai North). The road requirement of and the additional reclamation for a baseline scenario will be worked out. For the baseline scenario, it is assumed that all developments within the adjacent approved OZPs, in particular the Central District OZP and the CRIII project under the Central District (Extension) OZP, are fully developed but with no new development at the Wan Chai North OZP area. Any new development to be proposed at the Wan Chai North OZP area should not result in traffic increase exceeding the spare capacity of the baseline scenario road requirement. Otherwise, any additional road requirement that requires additional reclamation has to be justified with reference to the CFA's "overriding public need test".

16. The land formed for the key transport infrastructure mentioned in paragraph 2 above will provide an opportunity for the development of an attractive waterfront promenade for the enjoyment of the public. The Review will review the land use proposals of the promenade. In this respect, a preliminary master landscape plan for a waterfront promenade will be prepared. Finally, a conceptual scheme will be produced for public consultation.

17. The conceptual scheme will be revised taking into account views received during public consultation. The engineering feasibility of the revised proposals will then be assessed in detail.

Public Consultation

18. In view of the wide public concern on the issue of reclamation in the Harbour, we consider it prudent to gauge public opinion on the proposals of the Review throughout the review process. This Committee will be consulted at the Inception Report stage. The public will be consulted on the conceptual scheme in order to secure their acceptance of the scheme, before embarking on the engineering impact assessment review. The consultation will also cover the Legislative Council, concerned District Councils (i.e., Wan Chai, Eastern and Central & Western District Councils), professional bodies and affected parties.

Programme

19. The Review commenced on 11 March 2004. The current target is to have the conceptual scheme ready for public consultation by end 2004.

ADVICE SOUGHT

20. Members are invited to note the contents of this paper and comment on the scope, approach, methodology and programme of the Review as set out in paragraphs 10-19 above.

Secretariat, Harbour-front Enhancement Committee
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