

HKILA
Practice Committee
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Comments on North East New Territories New Development Areas Planning and Engineering Study – Stage 3 Public Engagement Digest

General comments

- **Cultural and local identity:** The design and planning of the study areas should reflect the scale of targeted population, local rural character and culture, as well as historical reference and identity. In order to signify the differences amongst the three NDAs and nearby developed new towns, a strong and unique language with cultural relevance should be identified and form part of the under-laying concept.
- **Response to environment:** The design and development of the NDAs should be fully compatible with the valuable existing natural landscape, surrounding villages, agricultural practices and vegetated/green areas to create a seamless and harmonious integration between the old and new. Some improvements to the studies, such as allowing sufficient buffer for conservation zone and gradual transition of rural urban gradient, acknowledgement of existing landscape characters, visual elements, local context and neighborhood connectivity to the overall design context, integration of a comprehensive greening strategy and demonstration of hydrology scheme with local retention and detention systems should be further developed to create a sensible and sustainable new town. Engineering concreted river channel and other artificial landscape features should be avoided as far as possible to respect the surrounding natural environment.
- **Tree preservation:** All trees should be preserved as far as practical. Comprehensive tree preservation, compensatory planting proposal and greening scheme should be carried out together with the preservation of registered and potentially registrable Old and Valuable Trees (OVTs) within these 3 NDAs. Further investigation and assessment of the OVTs should be carried out in order to minimize the impacts from the development.
- **Economic feasibility:** Economic feasibility study should be carried out to identify the labor availability for local employment to ensure a sustainable economic community can be created.
- **Presentation materials:** Images used to illustrate the intended landscape design characters and effects are somewhat misleading and irrelevant to the overall proposed urban design context. Appropriate images showing the actual character with the right context and physical background should be adopted.

Kwu Tung North New Development Area (KTN NDA)

- In general, the KTN NDA proposal is not presenting the green living environment as stated in the planning concept. A comprehensive strategy on urban greenery shall be proposed. Open space and public realm should carefully be planned and designed to connect different portions of the KTN NDA rather than using the conventional approach of segregating different zones, forming no dialogues among landuses. The proposed NDA is now cloning the existing new towns instead of designing a different form of green living experience, which is an important ingredient to respect the local context for the local and potential residents.
- Long Valley is located at the eastern part of the KTN NDA. Its ecological value is widely recognized for its wetland area, which attracts a number of resident and migrant bird species. The formation of a Nature Park in Long Valley is a positive intention to conserve ecologically sensitive areas. Nevertheless, a stronger layer of green buffer area should be provided to minimize the potential impact of the future development to the Nature Park, especially the western perimeters of Long Valley where the proposed development is immediately at the western bank of Sheung Yue River. The current proposal rigidly delineates existing agricultural field boundary to the Nature Park area and does not proactively take this planning opportunity to enhance the depth of conservation.
- Sheung Yue River is currently a river channel with greening works. As Long Valley is proposed to become a Nature Park, it is worth to explore the opportunity to return Sheung Yue River to its natural shape with ecological enhancement.
- The location of the proposed landmark building in the south of Sheung Yue River should be revisited. The proposed location poses potential disturbance to the conservation area; the scale, form, style and setting of the proposed landmark is also not compatible to the existing characters of the surrounding rural and agricultural environment. Whilst it is understandable that the image of landmark building is for indication purpose only, the reference of Grande Arche, Place de la Défense in Paris represents a design completely out of scale and local context. We are of the view that reference images should reflect the true design intention and project a relatively reality image of the development.
- The location of the proposed sports stadium at the northern part of the KTN NDA is questionable for it is relatively inaccessible to most of the residential areas. We expect more elaborations on supporting facilities in relation to the landuse to ensure the sports facilities will be easily accessed by users.

Fanling North New Development Area (FN NDA)

- The spatial planning and characterization of the FN NDA is really centered on the Ng Tung River. Therefore the treatment of the waterway itself, its ecological buffer, and public space along the riverfront should really be given much more thought. A comprehensive study on landscape strategy, with considerations on landscape ecology and river restoration should be a priority for the planning of this site. Some detail considerations are listed as follows:
 - a. This is a very good chance to study the feasibility of naturalizing the existing concrete nullah of the Ng Tung River by introducing a system of planted edges, detention ponds and wetlands, and meandering banks. This will have huge benefits in improving the river's ecological, hydrologic and scenic values; introducing much more diversified landscape experience for public space users; and consolidating the FN NDA's identity as a riverfront (not nullah-front) site. World-famous references for naturalization of concrete channels include the Los Angeles River Revitalization Scheme and the day-lighting of the Cheonggye Stream in Seoul.
 - b. More setback between the riverfront and the proposed building mass should be given in order to provide more green buffer and public spaces along the entire riverfront promenade.
- Ng Tung River and the hilly southern backdrop serve as one of the most valuable scenic resources of the site. The proposed elevated highway shown in the perspective rendering running across and stretching along the south side of the river severely damages this scenic backdrop. Not only does this engineered approach taking away the opportunity to naturalize and upgrade the 1970's approach to open channel design, it also very negatively affects the land-value of the prime riverfront properties of the FN NDA. With low density housing developments along the riverfront promenade interspersed with freshwater wetlands, this area has the potential to house the highest-value riverfront properties in Hong Kong if planned and designed properly. In regard to the elevated highway itself, a tunnel option may be considered if access is absolutely necessary.

Ping Che/Ta Kwu Ling New Development Area (PC/TKL NDA)

- We have a strong concern on the PC/TKL NDA site location, with the existing Wo Keng Shan landfill area (NENT Landfill) at the northeast of the site. With Hong Kong Southwest monsoon climate¹, the prevailing wind direction veers from easterlies to south-westerlies in summer time. Hence escaped smell from landfill will be carried by the prevailing wind directly towards the captioned site. The residential areas at southern part will suffer the most from the air pollution and poor air quality. With the current proposal, there are no mitigation measures how this potential controversial issue will be resolved or addressed.

- In the PC/TKL NDA proposal, the captioned area is intended for “special industries and the industries where Hong Kong enjoys clear advantages to support economic development”. The development theme is very similar to the current proposed Lok Ma Chau Loop development, which may lead to replication of land use. Also, in the RODP of PC/TKL NDA, we have reservation on the proposed land uses and their overall economic feasibility is questionable.
- With the proposed Central Park to comprise the existing Ping Che Yuen Ha Village and Wun Chuen Sin Kwoon, the extent and size of the Park should be reviewed to ensure sufficient buffer areas and mitigation measures against potential impacts from the residential and Special Industrial developments by the south and north respectively.
- The proposed sewage treatment plants will be situated right next to the existing elderly home, which will not be an ideal planning approach. The land uses should take in reference to the existing land use, with suitable mitigation measure provided.
- Wun Chuen Sin Kwoon is a significant local heritage, an overall planning and urban design should fully respond and respect to this particular local context and culture. Careful edge treatment with sufficient buffer areas should be taken into consideration during planning stage. As in the current proposal, the special industries zone is now directly interfaced with Wun Chuen Sin Kwoon, with no buffer areas and detailed mitigation measures provided.

1. Reference: Hong Kong Observatory – Weather Observation and Public Weather Service, March 2011